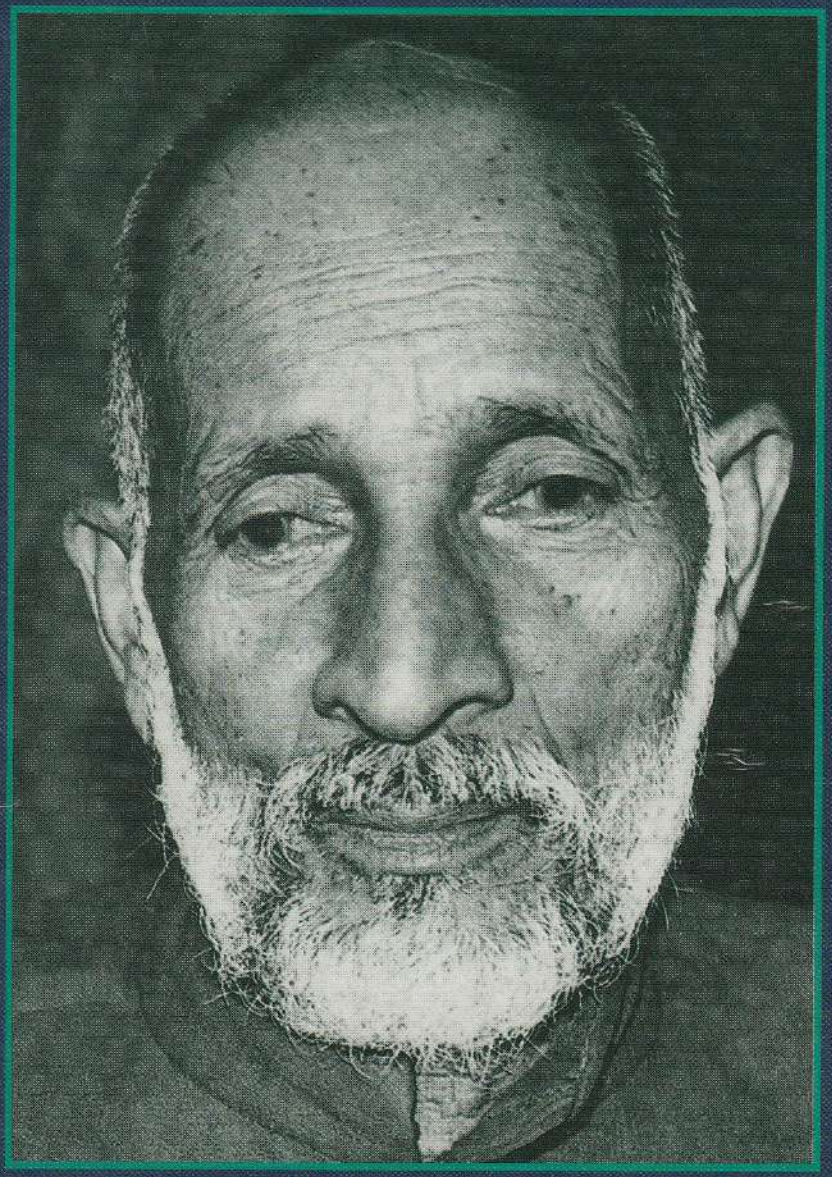
spiritual YATRA



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SPIRITUAL YATRA

by

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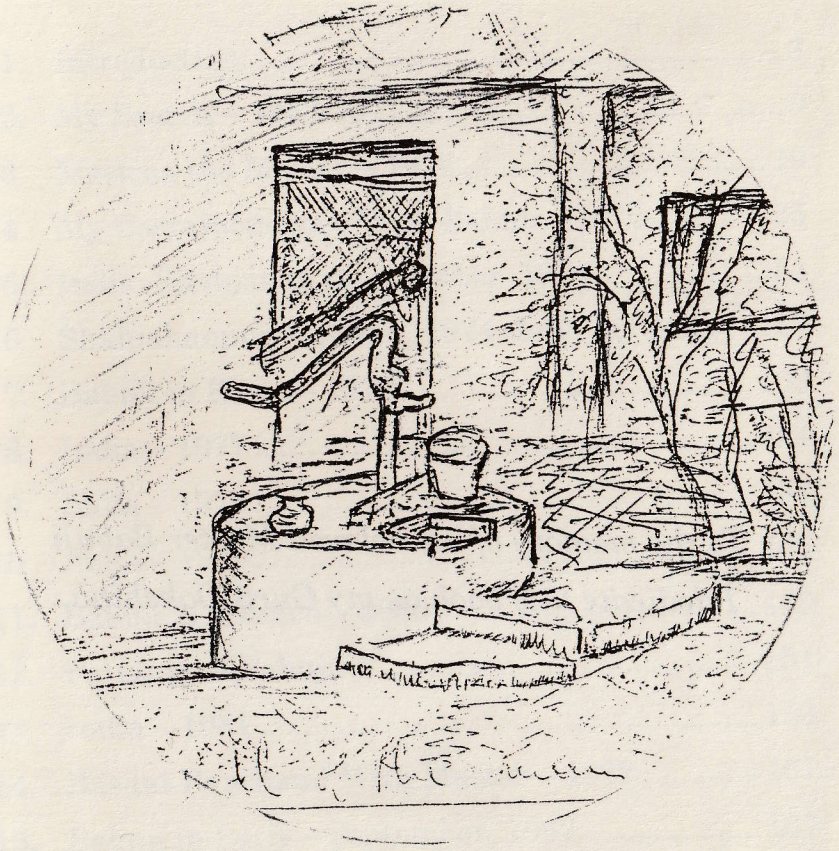

"Whoever feels thirsty will, of himself,
come to the river."

-Tagore

To the memory of my beloved Master Babuji
I dedicate this book as my Guru Dakshina.

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INTRODUCTION

Outside the ancient medieval walls that surrounded the village stood the large cave where for months we were living in small wooden huts, like many other families, to get way away from air-raids and bombing. It was cold and dark inside the cave and a damp musty smell permeated the whole place.

It was the winter of 1943/44. The so-called armistice had taken place a few months ago, but a cruel fratricidal war had started on this side of the country, while on the other side, the Fifth Army was trying to break through the enemy lines. The ancient Monastery of Cassino on top of the mountain, surrounded by the small village, half destroyed and famished, agonising under a mortal grip, still stood as an impregnable fortress around which thousands of youths were being sacrificed at every moment to the god of war. They wore different uniforms and spoke a different language, but was there any difference in what they were suffering?

Time seemed to have come to a standstill, but nature was going on indifferently in its repetitive cycle: the sun was still shining, the grass still growing, the flowers still blooming; man only was the cause of so much destruction and killing. It was only he, the fool!

Sitting on the ruins of my existence, in a desperate loneliness, I was watching bewildered, silently shivering in a cold that seemed to be everlasting. Experience

must be learned at one's own expense and nothing is more true than this.

With the enormous question mark as to the meaning of life, I was asking myself if there was a God somewhere and, if there was, how could He let all this happen? That was the period when I started my journey towards my Master. I was twenty-one years of age, but I felt a hundred. Tragedy had made me grow up all of a sudden. I felt mutilated of affection and things and, with them, my entire inner world had crumbled down.

Then one spring morning the Allies arrived. People were celebrating. Our soldiers started to come back home. Every day someone would return. Ragged soldiers, very often given up for dead, would unexpectedly reappear on the threshold of their home, and the cries of their fortunate families would be heard from afar. My brothers would never return; no doubt about that. Their bodies, wrapped up in a camouflaged military canvas, were buried in the small cemetery up on the hill. How many times I dreamt of them coming back! It must have been so many times that, in the recurrent dream, I started saying to myself over and over again, "This time it is true, it is not a dream." But on waking, the same cold truth was there. Was I envious of the others who had not died? But I never felt anything like that. My heart was bleeding and the bleeding of other hearts would only increase my own suffering.

I remember that the day my brothers were killed, the German command had sent two soldiers to my house to search for weapons. My mother was sitting in a corner, crying in pain like a wounded animal. The two soldiers were armed to the teeth, but under the heavy

helmets their child-like faces looked very sorry. Instead of searching around the house they put their guns down, went near my mother, and one of them said in broken Italian, "Mama ...We also have a mama waiting for us ... We are sorry," and his voice was very sincere. My Mother looked up at them and with a trembling voice said, "It isn't your fault." That day I understood that sorrow has only one name and both conquered and conquerors suffer for all that wars carry with them. This scene has remained engraved in my memory for a long time.

To see my father crying, silently, holding his head with both hands, is still one of the most aching remembrances of my life. These are the two different sides of pity. Pity for your own sorrow and pity for the sorrow of others. You suffer for your own sorrow and for the sorrow of people around you.

Why am I recounting all this? What has all this to do with my search for a spiritual Master? Very often, the events of life themselves make us take a turn and we start searching for something which could give our lives some meaning. We don't know exactly what we are looking for until we find it. It is like walking in the fog. As you go along you see better. You see a little more at each step.

❋❋❋

This was my state of mind when I, unknowingly, walked the first step towards my Master, or rather, when something up there started moving – something that would materialize only many years later.

It was the spring of 1944. The Allies had arrived and people had started returning to their homes. The war was going on up North, dotting its march with cemeteries. The house where we were staying had been damaged by bombing and at that moment we were living in a palace that belonged to a countess, where other refugees had found shelter. This palace was first the General Headquarters of the Germans, and then of the Allies when they arrived, and in between, the government had sent there people whose houses had been bombed. My mother and father, myself, and my two little sisters, at that time aged five and eight, were living there.

The top floor of this palace had been in normal times the servants' quarters; a long corridor ran from one end to the other. Up there my little sisters used to go and play with the other children. One day I was looking for them and I ended up where I saw a small staircase, and motioned to climb it, when one of the little girls told me, "Don't go, there are ghosts up there!" But I went. I climbed the stairs, and slowly pushed open the door. It was the turret, a small room with windows on all four sides. The floor was almost completely covered with a huge quantity of books, literally thrown in a pile like a pyramid.

I marvelled at such a discovery. All the books I owned had to be left behind in Sicily when we left because of the war. So I eagerly picked up one and read, and as I was reading, the words were pouring into me, deeply soothing my aching heart. I read on and on, and wondered who was this man whose words could have such a beneficial effect on my soul. His name was Rabindranath Tagore. The title was *Sadhana*. The subject was 'Reality'. Further on I read:

> "Once I met two ascetics of a certain religious sect in a village of Bengal. 'Can you tell me,' I asked them, 'wherein lies the special features of your religion?' One of them hesitated for a moment and answered, 'It is difficult to define that.' The other said, 'No, it is quite simple. We hold that we have first of all to know our own soul under the guidance of our spiritual teacher, and when we have done that, we can find Him, who is the Supreme Soul within us.' 'Why don't you preach your doctrine to all the people of the world?' I asked. 'Whoever feels thirsty will, by himself, come to river,' was his reply. 'But then, do you find it so? Are they coming?' The man gave a gentle smile and, with an assurance which had not the least tinge of impatience or anxiety, he said, 'They must come, one and all.'"

That day, somewhere deep inside me a seed was sown; the unspoken wish that I too could find such a Master had formed a strong will in my subconscious. But I did not know it at the conscious level. All I knew at the time was that whoever he was, this Tagore was speaking the language my soul wanted to hear. I took the book and have carried it with me like a Bible, but somehow, a little before I met Master, I lost sight of this book. After having taken me by the hand and accompanied me during all these long years, preparing the ground for me to receive my Master, Tagore had humbly disappeared, leaving the field clear to let Master accomplish his work.

Two years after I met Master, my mother came to see me in the mountains. She was carrying a book with her – it was Tagore. She said, "This book must be yours; I didn't know I had it." I felt tears in my eyes in having my old Tagore back, the patient teacher who

had taught me so much, who had found for me such a great Master, whose teaching is HUMILITY, SIMPLICITY, SURRENDER, who declares himself to be our servant, who runs towards us for each step that we walk towards him. Even if the way has been difficult and very often impossible to understand, I see now that every happening was one more link that would unite me to my Master.

MY SEARCH – 1943-1971

The years that followed the end of the war were hard for me. Life had started to normalize, but not for me; everything around me had changed, and I would never get back what I had lost. I desperately tried to find God but my religion did not help me. I simply came up against a wall. But Tagore has never let me down. He was the only light on my difficult road and was pointing straight to the East. I tried to find some more books by him in the libraries where I used to go – at that time I had no money to buy books – but I didn't find any. Even among friends, very few knew him as a poet, fewer as a philosopher, but none as the spiritual teacher that he was for me.

A long time had still to elapse until I was to meet my Master. My soul was restless; I was in search of something which I did not know where to look for. In my long search for God, I have felt his presence in the silence of the mountains, in the depth of the sea, and in every expression of nature, but back to normal environments, He became the unreal, the unreachable One. I wanted Reality, I felt it was there, but I did not know how to stretch out my hand to take it. I adored Nature and, in the effort of getting to God, I was splitting his Identity, and in the narrow observation of the bits I was missing the real object: the Whole.

"In our search for God we find so difficult ways and never see the nearest and simplest one, which is in fact inside us," my Master told me years later, when I had finally found Him. And Tagore had said, "We must first of all learn to understand our soul with the help of a spiritual Master..." But where could I have found a Master in Rome? So the years went by; the seed inside me was growing, and with it, the craving of my soul.

About three years before I met Master I had a wonderful dream. There was only light and sensations in it. I did not have a physical dimension and even my mind was there only as a spectator, alert and expectant in wonder. At the beginning my soul was pervaded by immense joy, mixed with light and sound. I felt I was on the point of seeing my brothers. Where and how I did not know; I did not care. It was an awareness which filled my heart with happiness such as in life does not exist. A divine happiness, growing and expanding higher and higher, beyond human limits with a sound which was not really a sound, but like a chorus of infinite sweet voices that seemed to be as one, arising from somewhere inside me, deeper than the pit of my stomach. And, like the bubbling of water in a bottle which is being filled rises in pitch until the water overflows when the bottle is full, in the same way I felt my soul overflowing from inside me, into a sea of light, overwhelmed by immense love and joy. There I, or whatever was there of me, felt to be in the presence of God, and I felt my own voice saying, "What a poor thing it is in comparison with this, the love that in the world I had considered great."

This description is only an attempt to put into words the experience of my soul, heart, and mind in this dream. But there are things which cannot be

described in words. Expressions fail and sound very poor. When I woke up, I felt as if my soul had been emptied and cleaned, every single cell of my blood, flesh, and bones had been purified, my heart was still flooded with light, and I was so happy that this happiness was pouring out of me like a river. I felt the need to sing. For three days I felt like this. I was walking without touching the ground. No matter where I was, everything around me was shining. Then slowly this condition faded away. But the memory remains.

Some more years went by. I was still feeling like the poor beggar that on Christmas Eve looks through the windows of a beautiful place sparkling with lights and festivity and, though he gets some benefit enjoying the sight, he knows that in a minute the curtains will be drawn and he will be cut off again and left in the darkness.

But someone was watching me from somewhere and could understand my state of mind. I started to experience meditation without having any knowledge of it. In moments of terrible longing for something inexplicable, I have sat in solitude and felt my soul responding to the mysterious call of something to which it could not resist.

My subconscious could feel that the arrival of my Master was approaching and the longing was making me restless. My soul started to be populated with figures: dark forms sitting on the ground in a mystic atmosphere, wearing long, coloured robes. They haunted me for years, crying to come out of my soul, until I started painting without knowing anything about painting, because I felt impelled within me the

need of pulling these figures out of my heart in a visible form.

Just to relieve myself, I started painting. I loved these people; I felt a link of mysterious affinity with them. So many years have gone by, so many things have happened, slowly but constantly directing me to my Master. One of the first sketches I have done is very rough, in black and white, and represents a woman sitting on the floor, legs crossed, hands gathered on her lap, eyes closed, in a deep pose of meditation. No one had ever told me anything about meditation. Even Tagore didn't say anything about meditation; he only spoke of a Spiritual Teacher that would help us to know our own soul.

Finally, in 1971 I met my "Messenger of God." For some mysterious reason, I myself had delayed this meeting by two years, refusing to be introduced to this person. I only knew him as a bridge player and I was not interested in bridge. Then, one winter morning he came with his family to our mountain house to spend a day on the snow. I cannot help but thinking, "If Mohammed doesn't go to the Mountain, the Mountain goes to Mohammed." Still, for another six months I tried to avoid this person, or at least I thought I had. Then one day, while we were camping with them on the beach, I saw him reading a book. I asked him what he was reading. He simply replied, "It is a book of my Master." I felt my heart jumping. I said, "A Master! You mean a spiritual Master?" "Yes," he said, "a Master of spiritual yoga." I couldn't believe my ears. Then he spoke to me about his Master and his system of meditation. I told him about my life, about Tagore, about my long search. He simply said that all the things that had

Inner courtyard at Babuji's home in Shahjahanpur.
(Author is at far right.)

happened to me were meant for my own good. He was a preceptor in Rome.

He gave me books to read and taught me how to meditate. "Sit down," he said. "Close your eyes and think that you have a light in your heart," and I remembered my dream and understood what he meant.

In that dream I had a glimpse of the conditions that can be achieved in Sahaj Marg meditation. It was a synthesis of all stages. And also the purification that I have experienced in that dream can be compared to the wonderful feeling that can be felt after Master's transmission. Later on, when I finally was able to write to Master about this dream, he replied, "Dreams sometimes bring into view the state which is behind our thoughts."

I read Master's books. They were like food for my hungry soul. They were small books, modestly printed on ordinary scrimpy paper, but they contained the secrets of the Universe and of man's path to realisation. And his knowledge was not a knowledge acquired through studies of the scriptures; it was imparted to him directly by Nature. It was his own personal experience. What fascinated me most was *Towards Infinity* (*Anant Ki Or*), a small book where he described the spiritual journey he had travelled through the various stages of consciousness in the dreadful expanse of the Infinite.

Sometime in November 1971 I wrote my first letter to my Master. The journey had been so long that I didn't know how to introduce the stranger that I thought I was to him. So, after some attempts at writing a letter, I ended up with a very short note:

13 November, 1971

Dear Master,

I have wanted to write to you for a long time but I did not know where and how could I begin telling you all the things that form the chaos in my soul. So I express myself with somebody else's words: "An infant is crying in the night and the language is only the language of a cry."

I heard about your Mission by a messenger of God. He has told me that all the things which have happened to me were meant for my good. This is hard to believe, Master, and I need your help. I have read your books, they are like food for my hungry soul. Help me Master, give me peace of mind and teach me how to meditate.

Affectionately,
Toni Bernardi

Master promptly replied:

Shahjahanpur, 24 November, 1971

My dear Toni Bernardi,

Received your affectionate letter dated 13th November 1971.

It is my duty to help those, spiritually who pine for peace. I shall be very happy to help you and you will find peace, and not only peace, but something above that also, provided you follow the meditation. I am sending you the copy of the "Method of Practice".

There is a preceptor of our Mission already in Rome, whose address is given below. It will be better if you go to him for transmission which is the chief instrument of our Mission. When you start the practice please inform me also.

I am also coming to Rome in summer – either in the end of April or in the beginning of May 1972. You will get information from our preceptor there provided you remain in contact with him.

With regards,

Yours Sincerely,
Ram Chandra

I remember that when I read Babuji's words, "you will find peace, and not only peace, but something above it also," at the time, I wondered what that "something above it" could be.

Throughout the years I could see that what he gave us was something that never stopped growing and expanding.

On the 23rd of December, 1971 I wrote to him:

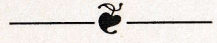
Dear Master,

I have received your dear letter of November 24th and I am very grateful for the immediate and soothing benefit I have already had. I started meditation that very evening; while meditating, my preceptor's face appeared to me just as clear as real. I tried to open my eyes but somehow I didn't or I couldn't. I wish I could understand why I saw his face.

I have spoken with Mr S.; he did not show any sign of surprise; to tell the truth, my impression is that he does not believe me. Anyhow he said that if you think he can do the transmission he will do it.

I will meditate from 11 to 11:30 every evening and from 7 to 7:30 every morning; I will count on your help, Master, I have been longing for this for almost a lifetime.

Affectionately
Toni Bernardi



Shahjahanpur, 11 Jan 1972

Dear Sister,

Received your affectionate letter of 23rd December, 1971.

I am very happy to know that you have started meditation in right earnest. Help is there in plenty. I have given power to Mr. Saravanamuttu and he can work well.

You have written to me that you have been longing for help in your spiritual pursuit. This long desire of spiritual attainment will surely speed up you progress.

Regarding the face of Mr. S appearing before you, I may tell you, since you want the reason of it. It so happens that sometimes heart takes the impression unconsciously and it appears. The

next explanation is that sometimes the teacher's face comes automatically before the taught. But these things have but little importance.

With blessings,

Yours sincerely,
Ram Chandra

MEETING THE MASTER – 1972

As he had said, the following spring my Master came to Italy.

It was the first time in his life that he had gone out of India. He was seventy-three years of age and was quite ill, but had come. I found myself waiting at the airport. There were also some other people whom I had never met before.

My soul was waiting eagerly to meet Master – this Master, who was travelling all the way from India because he had felt the cry of human beings who needed him. Then the plane arrived. Almost everyone had come out and finally he appeared in the doorway of the aeroplane and started climbing down the steps. My eyes were fixed on him. "He was a little man, well-built, of fair complexion, a short white beard around his face. He was wearing white cotton trousers and a black jacket, buttoned straight down. On his head he was wearing a white linen cap. He looked very simple and humble and an extraordinary peace was emanating from him. His eyes had a particular light which must have been the reflection of his soul. I did not shake hands with Master but saluted him in the Indian style.

Later on that day, I entered a large room in Casal Palocco and there I saw my Master sitting with his legs crossed, his hands gathered on his lap, with a smile on his face, an air of extreme peacefulness and a look in

his eyes which simply brushed off an entire existence with its load of sorrow, doubts, wounds, and frustrations, making me feel "just made" in a crystal-clear substance; and in front of my Master a lot of people sitting in the same way, on the floor, all feeling the same. A scene which was so familiar to my soul and still so new to my eyes.

For those few days I seemed to live in a particular atmosphere. A thick curtain had been drawn behind me, and nothing was important anymore, nothing mattered. It seemed to me that all I needed was there. Even the many questions that I wanted to ask him seemed to have lost their meaning. Words seemed to be something superfluous because what I was really experiencing was much more than what could be expressed in words.

I felt like a person who, after a long starvation, finds himself in the middle of a banquet. He doesn't care who gives the party or what the festivity is for. He feels that the food is divine and just sits as near as possible and starts feeding.

I can say that in those few days I lived the most extraordinary days of my life. Finally I had met my Master! Now he had a physical form, had a name, and I knew where I could find him.

When Chari told me that Master wanted me to be a preceptor, at first I was startled. I needed so much myself; how could I possibly be of any use to anyone? But then Master explained to me that it was his power that would work. Whenever transmitting, I would connect with him, like switching on a radio or a television set by merely pushing a button. I would be like the lamp that can be lit because it is attached to the source

of energy. Then he added, "When I will be away, of the whole tree, I will only remember four apples," (the four preceptors that he had intended to make) and I felt extremely happy for the privilege that would keep me in his memory and so near to that source of energy.

So the next morning Master gave me a special transmission. I was sitting on an armchair in front of him, my eyes closed, as I had been taught. It was a wonderful transmission. A shower of waves was literally pouring on me. My soul was receiving this blissful flow, as the rock of Gibraltar receives the waves of the ocean.

I do not know how long this transmission lasted, but my Master gave me all that I could bear and no more. After the transmission I felt calm, peaceful, clean, newly made. I felt that something had radiated through me with a tremendous cleaning power. I felt happy but not hilarious. I felt love but in an unemotional way. My mind was as clear as the water in a pond in the early hours of the morning and each thought occupied its own place in an orderly way. No confusion, no anxiety, no tension, no aching. All these things have vanished since then, like fog when the sun comes out. All this I felt.

Since then, my life has been flooded with light and love for everybody and everything and I have experienced wonderful sensations, and since then, for each step that I have walked towards my Master, my Master has run many more towards me.

I wish to point out that, though there was a kind of restless craving in me for a Master, this was a mute cry of which no one was aware. It was a silent long expectation which has taken nearly a lifetime. I did not know

where to look, but I knew exactly what I needed. Tagore had been the unseen spiritual teacher that had put me on the right path. At the end of that path only a Master like him could have stood. He had put himself at the service of humanity and humbly declared himself to be our public servant. He wanted nothing except love, which he returned in multiplied showers. He carried love with him to warm people's hearts. He carried that water with him that could quench people's thirst.

When the Master came in, my soul was like a storeroom. Things were all piled up in a disorderly way and covered with strings of unnecessary emotions, frustrations, and resentments for the long effort made. He has cleaned my soul of all superfluous objects.

Through meditation, my Master has made me discover how all the things I was craving for are inside ourselves, how one can find in his own self the power to overcome all limitations and discover our affinity with the Absolute of which we are a part.

That year, Babuji came twice to Italy, but the second time, after his long tour throughout the States, he was quite ill and tired. When the time for his departure came, we accompanied him to the airport and, while Chari was busy with the check-in procedures, I sat near Babuji. He looked very fragile and suffering. I was feeling very sad. I had just found my Master, but now he was leaving again.

We followed him up to the embarkation gate. There Babuji stopped and, feeling our sadness, raising both hands, said with a sweet smile, "I am not going." They

seem just words spoken out of courtesy, but it was really so. Babuji, my Master, never went away.

Babuji's teaching continued through a constant correspondence which lasted till 1974, when I finally could go to see him in India. But in the meantime, he never stopped helping and assisting me in the difficult work that he had given me, for which I was perhaps not good enough. But he was always there, always present, with his great love and his divine firmness.

My Correspondence With Babuji
1972-1974

Roma, 15 September, 1972

My dear Master,

Sara has told me that you are still having pains in the stomach and I am very sorry to hear this. If I only could do something for you, Master, but I am nothing than a thick crust of grossness.

Since you went away I have had many ups and downs and I knew that this was going to be so. When you were here everything was so simple, your presence could wipe out all doubts.

Generally my meditation is good, I feel it very much, my heart is flooded with light which makes me feel love for everything and everybody, but I still do not see where this can lead me. I can do nothing to help others. There is a gap I feel, it is like going to university without having been to school ever before. It is difficult to convince people. When you were here I absorbed spirituality directly from you, not through my brain, but through my soul. Even now whenever I concentrate on you I feel the same. But when it comes to people it is different; they do not understand, they take it for a joke. They want me

to explain in words what this is all about and when I tell them that all they have to do is sit down in a comfortable position and think that they have a light in their heart, let all thoughts that cross their mind run away without holding them, the general reply I usually get is that this is something they have always done. Apparently everyone has always been meditating. One while sitting on the toilet in the morning, another while drinking coffee in the morning, another one finds freedom from tension while reading and I cannot explain to them that the kind of meditation I mean is much, much more than that. When things like this happen I always ask for your help, but my development is very low and I do not know whether you feel my need for help.

I have had sittings in my house every week all through July.

Very soon I will have to start working in Latina, which is a town about seventy kilometres from Rome.

My dear Master, look after yourself, for our sake, we all want you to come back to Italy.

Affectionately,
Toni

Shahjahanpur, 11 October, 1972

Dear sister,

Received your affectionate letter of 15th September. Pain still persists. I shall reach Madras

on 13th October '72 for the sake of treatment of the doctor who is already treating me.

I am happy that your meditation is good and you are improving also. But suppose you do not enjoy the meditation at any time or feel boring in carrying it out, you should not be disgusted at all. Divinity brings changes, so that an abhyasi may develop power for higher reach. You feel that you are flooded with light, that is a very hopeful improvement. I have promised to you also to send you to the Cosmic Region within a year, which is too short a time for it. But devotion to the teacher from disciple and transmission from the Master makes it easy.

The idea that you can do nothing to help others is a sort of weakness. You can do it much better. You say that it is like going to the University without having gone to school ever before. Really we enter into the University of the Divine where there are no sections. It is the place where there is no A-B-C-D. I assure you again that you will do well.

The people may be doing meditation, as you write, in toilet and at the time of coffee. It is also to be appreciated in comparison to those who do not meditate at all. But it is our duty to bring them gradually to the proper form of meditation. We should do our duty, not minding that others do their duty to us or not. If they cut jokes, at least at that time the Divinity is in their mind. It is also helpful.

I always need your help because humanity gets inspiration from humanity. Nature sometimes differs. A bad idea proves a good thing, but what

we have to do is only to have a grip always on Divinity. I was never disappointed in this matter and worked single-handed, and the result is before us all.

About your condition, if I express in some other way, I will say that it is like a man who is bodily strong but thinks himself to be weak and goes to the doctor. I have got full confidence in myself and it works. The same thing I want from all of you.

Yours sincerely,
Ram Chandra

Roma, March 30, 1973

My dear Master,

Luciana has come to see me yesterday and she has brought with her a deep breath of Indian atmosphere.

I am very devoted to you, Master, and never even for a moment you have been away from me, even though I have not written to you for a long time. I wrote the enclosed letter in December, sometime between the 1st and the 14th, but before I mailed it to you something happened to me which brought a storm into my spiritual life. I had to keep firm until the storm had passed. I was sure that the seed you planted in me had developed strong roots but I had to let the storm pass. And it has passed, with the help of my Master. [...]

You read my heart, Master, and you know everything in it, and if what I mean is not correct, please correct it. Just for the sake of justice. One thing I can tell for myself: blows and storms make the tree stronger if they do not break it. Well, I broke my ankle – maybe to show my vulnerability, but I feel much stronger than before. I have a great wish to see you. I hope it will be soon. [...]

With devotion,
Toni

Rome, 18 May, 1973

My dear Master,

I am back in Rome from Torino where I spent a week for work. I very much hoped to find a letter from you, but nothing. Instead I found a letter from Chari dated 19th April 1973. It has taken nearly a month to get here. This is due to the mail strike which has been going on for nearly two months. On March 30 I sent you two long letters and three photographs of some people from Latina. I hope you have received them.

Yesterday I had a telephone call from Lucy. She has received a letter from you. In this letter you also speak of me. I love you, Master. You have been in my thoughts all the time no matter where I am, no matter what I do, and you help me always. I wish I could see you very soon.

The goal is a long, long way but God is good with me because through you I can see sparkles of it sometimes, I have also experienced wonderful sensations of sweetness and peace. These sensations unfortunately are alternated with material thoughts. So sometimes I get the peculiar feeling of not belonging anywhere. I do not belong to this feverish intense life anymore and I do not belong to the Universe, and the same thing happens to Lucy. It is difficult to explain, but I feel like a bird locked up in a room, it can only fly up to the ceiling, if the ceiling was not there he could fly higher. The ceiling is my grossness, I suppose. What should the bird do, accept to walk on the pavement? How can he after he has found out that he can fly? I pray you Master, do not leave us on the pavement.

Lucy came to see me after she had been to India; she was radiant with spirituality. I could feel it and she gave me a wonderful sitting. How lucky she was to have spent twelve hours on the train with you, just the two of you. Will I ever have such an opportunity?

My leg is all right now. Physical pain never bothered me much; what affects me most is mental or sentimental pain. In life I have always lost the persons I loved. When I was twenty I lost my two brothers; they were shot together by the Germans during the war, they were only sixteen and twenty-three years of age. This tragic event has conditioned my mind and all my life. You may think that in the West we are too emotional, and maybe we are, but whose fault is it? I have been born here and I bear all the faults of the Westerners. I loved my brothers more than

anything else in this world. I never recovered from that shock until I met you. That was the first change that spirituality has brought into my life. After so many years, they have completely vanished from my heart. I do not suffer for them anymore. If I do try to think of them I feel them very, very far.

When they died I took upon myself responsibilities far superior to what I was entitled to. I put my own life aside and decided to dedicate myself to the rest of the family; I still had two little sisters and my mother and father. I decided not to marry the man I was engaged to, though I loved him very much. I thought that this was my duty. Maybe I was wrong but this is what I have done. The years that followed were very hard for me. That was the time when I needed you. When I needed to hear words such as yours; you would have indicated to me the right path through the incomprehensible and intricate labyrinth of life. I tried to find God but I had no help from my religion, I had to build up a philosophy of my own, mainly based on Indian philosophy, because I felt that it was the deepest and the truest. Only when I was thirty-four I married my husband, because he was a good man and loved me. And then I did not want to have children, I was afraid I would lose them. I did not want to suffer anymore. Now I know that I have been a coward, or was this my karma? Why did you come so late in my life and why had I to come to you through one more sorrowful experience? It is true that God's ways are infinite but it is also true that they are difficult to accept; if I could know the 'why's of my life I would accept them

better. Maybe these are the things that keep me on the pavement.

I would like to tell you about a dream I had about three years before I met you which I have kept inside me like a treasure and never told anyone, also because I did not know anybody who would have understood. [...]

In that moment my heart had come to the surface, great as the Universe Itself, appeased and silent, merged with the oneness. I was also there, don't know what part of me, but I felt my mind formulate this thought: "What a poor thing it is in comparison to this, the love I considered great in the world." The words or thought were actually in Italian and I did not formulate them, everything came by itself, I was merely a spectator. I must add this: what I felt cannot be described in words; it was much, much, more and this is still a poor expression. That is why I have never told anyòne. But I knew I would have told you one day if God had helped me to put words together. When I woke up I felt as if my soul had been emptied and cleaned, that light had purified every single cell of my blood, flesh and bones, my heart was luminous and purely happy, and the happiness was so much that I felt it was pouring out of me. This extraordinary feeling lasted for three days, then gradually faded way.

Affectionately,
Toni

Shahjahanpur, 16 June, 1973

Dear Sister,

I am in receipt of your letter dated May 18,1973, though late.

I have already replied to your previous letters along with that of Sister Luciana. But I presume that you have not received it due to the Mail strike.

When I read your letter I feel whether I should appreciate you or your letter. The result is that I appreciate you and also the letter gushing out from the core of your being.

When we think of the goal its longing brings the distance in view, because we have become used to such sort of thinking. We try to see the atoms in the cosmic but we do not think of ourselves who is a constituent of so many atoms.

In the beginning we enter what is behind the matter and we touch only, the ground and not the Reality. When we dive deep then we bring the pearls out of it. The wisdom of man is that he should make the unfavourable things favourable. In other words, we should try to succeed in converting the whole of the material force into spirituality and it so happens in Sahaj Marg system if we get a competent Master. All the fibres of the being become spiritualised and Reality begins to radiate. I am preparing such souls so that they may have the full benefit of my services.

It is of course the tragedy of the event that you have lost your two brothers in the German war, but if you study deeply you will feel that you have found so many brothers to love.

The people of higher attainments begin to love each other but there comes a time when the affection seems to have lost because it merges itself with its own reality.

"Love is the hunger of human soul for divine beauty," according to Socrates.

According to me "Love is the inner awakening to the Reality."

The gist of Indian philosophy, as I understand, is to think everybody as his own, and in that case there will be no bickerings and no wars.

I don't think that you are coward at heart, but the circumstances made you think like that. Really speaking disappointments make one a coward. If somehow, we remove the prefix 'dis', 'appointment' remains; that means we have been appointed for something. When we have been appointed for a certain job we can never think that we are unable to do it. That means a sort of wave is working smoothly and you are carrying on with it. In that case there is no idea either of the past or of the present.

'Karma' works in its own sphere. Why we then should not work in our own sphere, which is pure and simple.

The dreams sometimes bring into view, the state which is behind our thoughts. Sometimes the poets who are not spiritual give the spiritual expressions because accidentally they touch the

spiritual plane. Almost similar is the case in dream.

You have written a very nice idea. "I tried to find God but I had no help from my religion." Religion is really the sign post and you will have to pave right the way for yourself.

I appreciate your idea that ceiling is the impediment for the birds to soar higher which you have called as grossness. Really speaking we have so many limitations. If they are cut off soaring higher becomes easy. Sahaj Marg stands for it which is one of the uniquenesses of the system.

With best wishes,

Yours affectionately,
Ram Chandra

7 June, 1973

My dear Master,

I am in Torino again. I am busy in the office but I need to write to you, just a few lines. I remember once you said, "I will do your work for you." ... I take it for granted, Master. I have not received any letter from you, but I do receive your transmissions and I want to thank you heartily for not abandoning me.

Blacky, my dog, died last week. He was sixteen years old and was suffering from old age, just like a human being; according to my religion animals have no soul, but I do not believe it. Do

you think that he may come back as a human being? He was afraid to die, I could see it in his eyes. Why should animals be afraid of dying if they do not understand what death is?

I am temporarily working in Torino, which is one of the main Italian cities in the Northern part of Italy. I will be here all June and maybe also in July, until my Company will settle down in Latina; in the meantime I have found an apartment in Latina; it is a large apartment situated on the top floor of a high building with a large terrace and a beautiful view of the country and mountains and plenty of room for the people that will come to see you.

My husband will reach me here for the weekend and I very much hope that he will bring me a letter from you.

Affectionately,
Toni

28 June, 1973

My Dear Sister,

Received your affectionate letter dated June 7, 1973. I have already replied your previous letter under this office letter No. C/939/SRCM dated Jun 16, 1973. I believe it must have reached you by now.

I am sorry to learn that your faithful dog Blacky died at the age of 16 years. In India the age of dog is calculated as 12 years, although

bitch of my father's friend died at the age of 22 years. I have got only one example of this type. I presume, you were waiting, excuse me, for his death, because you said while I was in Rome that you would come to India after the death of Blacky.

Dog died for further evolution.

You were benefited by my transmission and it is a happy sign that you have accepted it.

I remember my promise also to give you spiritual progress to the Cosmic soon, because I have to take work from you and I am already taking work. I believe both of us are bound by duty.

I am happy that you got a good house but we should also try to make our own house better which we really live in so that pious radiation may become the global area for your abode.

With best wishes to both of you,

Yours affectionately,
Ram Chandra

Latina, 16 July, 1973

My Dear Master,

I have received your dear letters of June 16th and June 28th and I thank you very much. Your previous letters must be lying forgotten among the tons of mail which was left behind during the strike and will never be delivered (I have heard that the Government will have it destroyed). I

cannot think of letters from you getting lost. They are too important.

I wanted to write to you immediately but somehow I could never finish the letter I had started. Work in the office is getting very hard. The heat makes people nervous and I am getting very tired of travelling north and south. What a crazy, senseless life we are living. I don't know what I would do without you. And I am so selfish that I have not even asked you how you are and if that bad pain you had has gone.

During the long hours of my every-day driving I always talk to you. I wonder whether you hear me, Master. You say, " We should try to succeed in converting the whole of the material force into spirituality." I am trying but I only succeed if I concentrate and ask for your help. I love to read your letters, over and over again; sometimes I start from the first one and read them all, like a book. How lucky I have been to have met you. To come to India to see you is my greatest wish, but you know that Blacky wasn't my only impediment. In this regard I would like to tell you that in some circumstances not only I feel a ceiling above my head that prevents me from soaring higher but I also feel as if being held by my feet (by events).

It seems that all kind of difficulties arise around me, especially from my own home. Is this because God wants to try me? To see what resistance I have? Maybe this is what you mean when you say, "You will have to pave right the way for yourself." I will succeed because you will

never let me down. I am sure that soaring higher will be easier one day.

Affectionately,
Toni

Shahjahanpur, 2 September, 1973

My dear Toni,

Received your affectionate letter. I am sorry that I am replying to it with great delay. The strikes are going on almost in every country and we are troubled by all these happenings. But pause a little to consider how they work and what will be the result. The activities produce power whether it may be of mind, heart or the body itself. You have started so many yogic schools so that every nerve may be exercised to produce strength in man. Having regard to this fact, strikers also produced some movement to make the nation stronger. Silence will produce the result in bringing the soul to work as the nature wants. So we recommend silence in the whole frame of our being, so that everything given by God, may have the orderly relation with each other, to bring the balanced state.

You have asked me whether I hear what you say to me. Apparently the answer to that is God hears without ears, and I have got ears. So can you not conclude I hear what you say?

You ask for my help and I am meant for that. But there is talk in silence also and that rebounds itself.

Sister, now I want to talk to you. Why Gurus of the day are not so much respected? Because they want that others may respect them. I call it a saintly fallacy. They should try to deserve so that others may value them. First of all, they should love their associates, without any selfish gain. And think themselves to be the public servant and not the public masters.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,
Ram Chandra

24 October, 1973

My Dear Master,

Some time ago I received your dear letter of September 2nd, 1973 and as usual I am replying to it with great delay, but you are well located in my heart all the time and my heart is in continuous contact with your heart either by feeling, or thinking or complaining, or asking either with spoken or unspoken words; it is all the same. Thanks to you there is a wonderful light in my heart all the time, I feel and almost see with my mind a larger horizon, a more spacious view, more understanding and confidence, I do not exactly know what it is that I understand better because is it not only something of the mind but

something which covers every inch of myself, inside and outside. [...]

I reckon that my work is not easy but with your help I will succeed. I am at your disposal, Master. All I wish is to hand over to them the confidence I have in myself which you have transmitted into me. For instance, one night I gave a sitting to four people from the office in my house and while the first ten minutes were completely all right the rest was a failure because someone started to move and they finished up laughing. I kept on for a while, then I had to give it up. Some time ago this would have discouraged me very much but now it doesn't because for at least ten minutes God had stayed in their hearts and minds and that is already something you would have said. [...]

Westerners need more words to be persuaded because they do not go so much by feelings but mostly by what they see and touch and I always pray you to put on my lips the right words that would touch their heart and open it to spirituality. [...]

Another thing I wish to tell you: although I feel all I have said above, I must add that those peaceful sensations are alternated with days and days of a kind of pain, or anguish or longing – I don't know exactly but it is something which aches, though not on the material plane, because I feel it relates to something which is not material. Maybe one of the reasons is that I lack a balanced state in me, because while my soul is craving for silence, I am forced to live in the noise. In fact, the

only way to feel better for me on those days is a longer meditation.

Hoping to see you soon,

Yours affectionately,
Toni

18 December, 1973

My dear sister,

Received your very affectionate letter dated 24th October 1973. I do not know how to reply such a beautiful letter, still I have to do something. First of all, I must tell you the cause of delay in reply. It was due to my long illness which is not yet totally over. The letter shows that you are so much deeply attached with me, which will result in swimming to the higher planes. All ins and outs will have equal values. The things mentioned in your letter are your spiritual experiences.

Our Western people have been trained on the lines they had at their base. If somehow, that base begins to accept that Reality, the whole fibre of their being will become spiritualised. They have got scientific brains so they want to be convinced in a scientific way. Sahaj Marg system speaks scientifically itself, until we cross the matter after which science cannot work because you feel awakened to the Real substance which is so subtle that cannot be explained in words. It is really the feeling or awareness that brings the knowledge of Divinity.

The talk with the gentleman about the example of a child growing up into a man, given by you, was excellent. We should convince a man, and that convincing means, sowing seed of Spirituality which will grow. The method and devotion bring peace but it takes higher step also where Peace is lost in Peace. Sometimes one feels better, and sometimes not. This change produces power. So it is always better. So, whatever happens to us internally is for our good. What you have mentioned as an anguish is really longing for Reality in sub-conscious mind and I must congratulate you for that.

With Best wishes,

Yours affectionately,
Ram Chandra

25 March, 1974

My Dear Master,

I hear that you are still very ill and consequently your trip to Europe has been cancelled; both these things make me very sad and sorry. [...]

I was longing for the moment I would see you again. I had told myself that I would stay near you all the time, quietly, like your shade. Wherever we may be, wherever we may go, either in this world or in some other, never leave me, Master; you can print your heart and thoughts in my own heart

and thoughts so that my subconscious carries them for eternity. [...]

I have read in a book that the thoughts of the sages are recorded in the *akasha*, which is, if I understand well, the Universal Ether contained in the space, and travelling through the space they can penetrate in the mind of the people. Since I have known this I have tried to keep my mind clean and receptive so that your thoughts may come to me, make me worthy of you, my dear Master, this is a prayer.

I was so pleased to receive your letter saying that you were feeling better. Whenever I have a letter from you I feel like having a shower of divine energy. In one of your letters you say, "Divinity brings changes." It is true, if I compare the self that I am now I can see the difference which is great, especially with regard to the richness that you have brought into my soul. [...]

My meditation is getting better all the time. I swim among things made of light in motion while my mind flies higher and higher and the higher it flies the lighter is the sensation and my soul feels appeased and wishes nothing because it is full of goodness. I wish everybody could feel as I do. They do not know what they do not have, and could have.

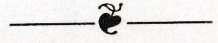
Some days ago I went with Rose to see a painting exhibition. The painter was a young girl, sister of a girl who works in the office with me; the works were mainly drawings made with a pen in a child-like style but what was shocking (at least to me) were the livid contorted faces they represented, they made me feel cold in my soul. I

looked at the girl, which was in net contrast with her works, and it came natural to me to say, "But you cannot feel like that." I know I was being a bit rude but I couldn't help it, and I asked her what she thought of spirituality. She looked at me coldly, her attitude on the defensive side, and said, "I believe in nothing. Spirituality is just a word which means nothing to me." [...]

Will I have the chance to talk to you again, Master? I wish it so much. I would like to ask you so many things but at the same time I do not want to make you feel tired. In another letter I will talk to you about an experience I had during meditation about a month ago.

Best wishes for a prompt recovery.

Affectionately,
Toni



Shahjahanpur, 25 May, 1974

My dear Sister,

I am replying your letter dated 25th March 1974 received here on May 23rd 1974. It was so affectionate letter that it went deeper into my heart appreciating you all along. Every word of it speaks of the craving you have for Reality. The men in general are so engrossed in the world that they do not think of the above. Of course world would not be neglected but it should go side by side with spirituality equally glittering. It is all your love that you feel shower of Divine Grace

and it is really so. The Ultimate consciousness can transform a man, and not the Supra-mental of Shri Aurobindo. It is my conviction and experience for it. I said somewhere that Divinity brings changes. The girl whom you talked to in the exhibition is but a girl, so she is yet to evolve.

I am growing better day by day now, although the ailments still persist but they are not so acute. Brain is weak and I cannot do mental work even an hour. Now you write me your experience which you have had a month ago. Giddiness prevails if I attempt to work more and more. I shall be all right, I assure you. Recently I developed hernia on the right side.

With best wishes,

Yours affectionately,
Ram Chandra

22 June, 1974

My dear Master,

I have received your affectionate letter of May 25th which surprisingly took only ten days to get here. Your words are a shower of divine bliss for me and I appreciate your assurance that you will be all right.

The "above" has always been inside of me, Master, even when I did not know what it was, what name it had. [...]

Now I am going to tell you about the experience I mentioned in my last letter. It

happened on the 7th of February between 9 and 10 P.M. while meditating. In that period what I felt was so intense that, as soon as I closed my eyes, I felt soaring high, my mind and heart floating in a sea of peace and bliss, and always in front of me I saw a whirling movement of luminous corpuscles rotating around a dark centre, continuously changing direction of rotation, but the dark centre remained always there, unchanging in size and colour. Even during the day, if I closed my eyes I saw the same thing – a magnificent divine firework. That night I started meditating as usual and immediately the friendly thing was there, but all of a sudden it started to come towards me at a fantastic speed and the dark centre was getting larger and larger, I felt I was being attracted by it, I was on the edge of this mysterious black pool, I could not follow what was happening because it was too quick, my heart was beating fast, my mind was void completely; [...]

I was terribly scared, immediately I opened my eyes and rubbed my face to be sure I was still alive, still sitting in my house. [...]

It was a spiritual-material confrontation and materiality prevailed. This makes me very sad. ...

Yours Affectionately,
Toni

Shahjahanpur, 17 August, 1974

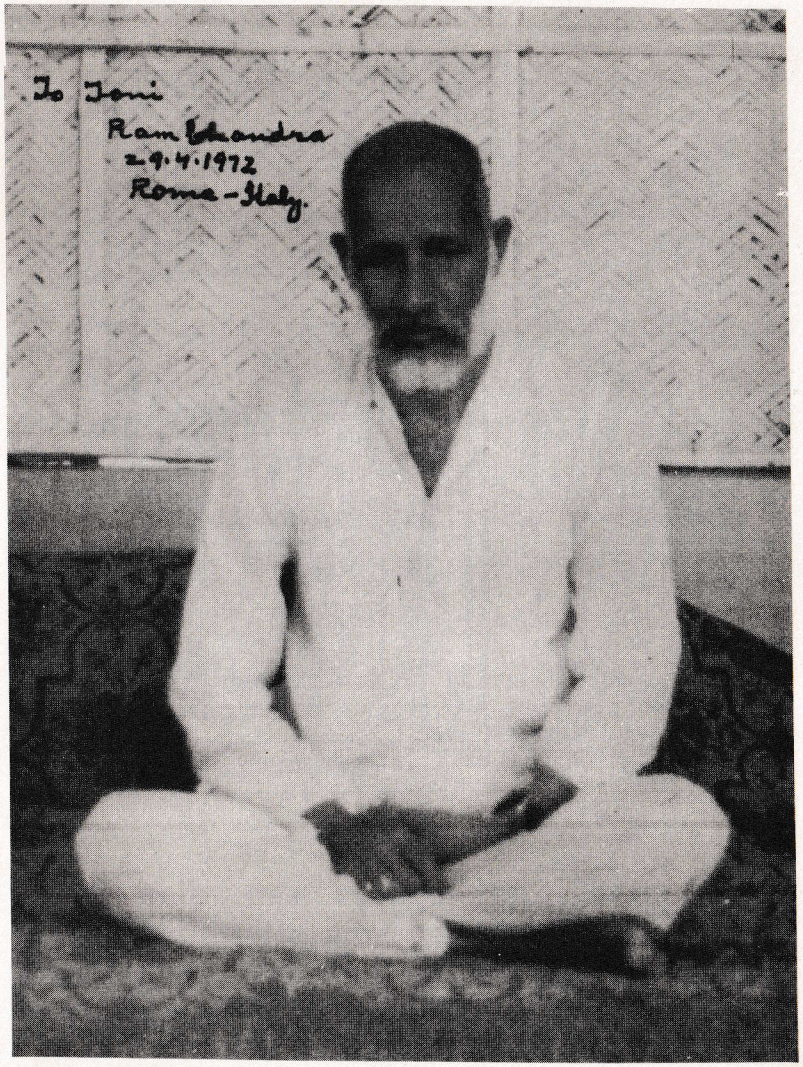
Dear Sister,

Your letter of 22nd June 1974 reached here on 27th July 1974. It was my resting period and so I could not reply earlier. All your experiences show craving for higher attainments.

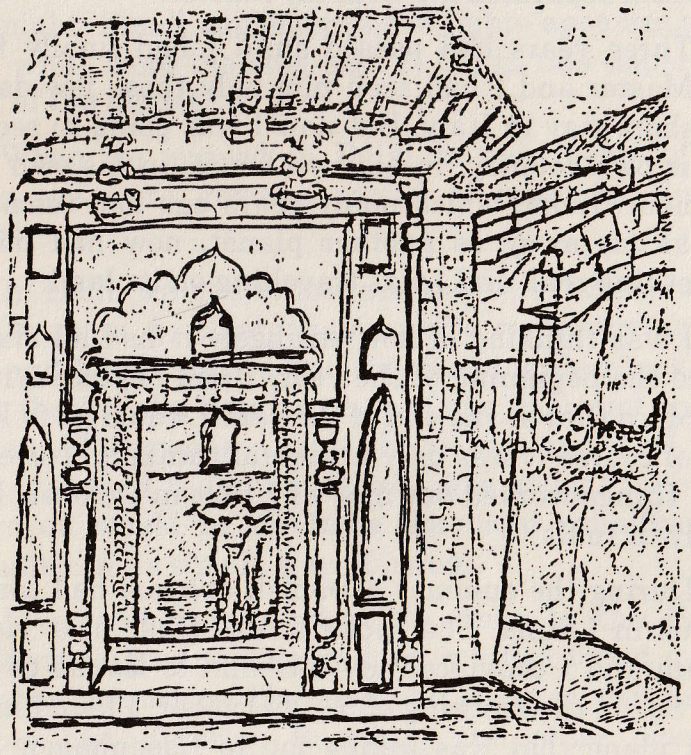
Sahaj Marg attempts at the Highest. You proceed through the different centres to reach the last one. One who is sensitive feels the conditions of the different centres crossed. During my student life I could not feel where I was, but the condition I was observing at each step. Changes I felt and transformation was there. My Master has clarified the things coming in, then I could see the true picture of my condition. Peace comes in the way but it also changes its colour and finally it becomes 'non-peace Peace'. In our approach to Reality if our Master is at the highest pitch, we sometimes feel the higher condition, though momentarily, and it adds the potency for the other higher level. You wrote in your letter that your mind was void completely. This is good. Further on you have written that some part of me was terribly scared which you mentioned a black pool. I feel that you have seen both the sides – the darkness and light which means that you pick up the light and leave the darkness. I.e., adopt the best one.

Yours affectionately,
Ram Chandra

This was the last letter I had from Babuji. After my stay with him in Shahjahanpur in October 1974, he didn't reply to my letters any more and when, later, I asked him why his correspondence with me had stopped in 1974, he replied, with that sweet smile of his, "Because since then you have started running."



India: Shahjahanpur, October, 1974



The train was running through a beautiful countryside. The green of the coltures was shining in the intense heat of the early afternoon. In the first class compartment where Birthe and I were travelling, a large fan was working noisily but I was in a sweat and my clothes were sticking on me like a second skin.

Through the iron rods of the small window I was looking at the continuous changing of the view. I could see farmers working in the fields, women doing their washing at the edges of the water pools, goats and buffaloes resting under the shade of huge trees, small villages and straw-roofed huts flashing away. As I was looking, enchanted by all this, I was counting the hours that still separated me from my Master.

Three years had passed since I had finally found my Master and I had seen him only those few days of his short stay in Italy. But now I was going to see him in his own country, in his own house, in his own environment. India, which many years ago had seemed to me as far away as another planet, now had become something real, and I was travelling on its land.

I was thinking of how strangely it had all started. Since the beginning of the year, I had begun saying in the office that at the end of the year I would go to India, but of course it was only a wishful thinking. Nevertheless, things worked out in a way that in October, I was really in India.

During the summer a Danish abhyasi had come to see us in Latina. She spoke to us of her next visit to Babuji and I convinced my husband to let me go with her. So, on the morning of 5th of October, I found myself on a plane that was taking me to Copenhagen, from where, the next morning, Birthe and I would leave for Delhi via Moscow.

My dog had died, and I was going to India for my further spiritual development, as Babuji had said.

In Moscow, when we boarded the Aeroflot aircraft that was going to take us to Delhi, we found a lot of confusion. The crew was nervously shouting and, from

what we could gather, it seemed that the passengers were more than the number of seats. It so happened that Birthe and I were pushed into the first class!

The flight was very comfortable and smooth. All night I spent flat-nosed against the window pane.

On the land below, long chains of snow-capped mountains seemed like huge animals laying asleep in the night. Small agglomerates of lights appearing once in a while were the only sign of life in this impervious part of the planet.

When we arrived in Delhi as passengers of first class, we were given a record of beautiful Russian songs.

In Delhi we had to lose one day to get reservations on the train for Shahjahanpur. We were staying with Mr. and Mrs. Sundara and that evening they took us to visit the Ashoka Hotel: a place of one thousand and one nights. That evening I saw the richest and most fascinating side of India, but what I was going to see from there on would be an India poor and primitive, but dignified in its simple way of living.

I remember that when we went to the Baroda building to get the reservations, we had found quite a number of tourists. They were all going to visit famous places like Kajurao, Rajastan, and other places of tourist interest. We were going simply to Shahjahanpur!

The clerk looked at us in amazement and asked whether we were really sure that we wanted to go there. Such was Shahjahanpur – unknown even in its own country.

Suddenly, a violent banging at the compartment door made me come back to the present. The train had stopped in the middle of the country and a crowd of beggars had climbed on the train and was now banging at the compartment door with wooden sticks. Luckily, we had bolted the door from the inside. From the outside, others had climbed up to the window, stretching their arms through the iron rods, trying to grab something. I was frightened and shocked. I stood flat against the opposite side of the compartment, feeling quite uneasy with all those eyes staring at me from the small frame of the window.

After what seemed to me an incredibly long time, the train started moving and the beggars ran away.

At Bareilly, a large city about halfway between Delhi and Shahjahanpur, I could finally open the door and look outside the window. I saw a sea of worn out shirts gliding on a dirty pavement, and amidst it all, like an island in a rough sea, a young couple with a child had spread a clean blanket on the floor and were sitting on it. He was wearing a clean white shirt and she had on a nice sari. On a suitcase next to them stood a thermos and a glass.

A little girl, about seven years old, holding a child in her arms came near the window, insistently begging for money. She was very nice-looking, had deep black smart eyes and wore a ring in her nose. The child she had in her arms was almost naked and as dirty as she herself was. With a low monotonous whining voice she was begging insistently. I was waiting for the train to move before handing her something, because I knew that if I had done so, in a few minutes a crowd of not only children, but also of grown up people would jump

on the train. Master had warned us never to give money in a crowded place. It could have been dangerous. As soon as the train started moving I gave her a few rupees and she ran away happily.

As the train was pulling on, the sun was getting lower, and its slanting rays gave a tinge of rose to the water in the pools. Cattle and buffaloes were being brought to the pools after a day's work. Farmers were returning to their huts.

When we arrived at Shahjahanpur, two Danish abhyasis were waiting for us at the station. Babuji had sent them to meet us.

The girl wore a white sari and the boy had on a kurta and a dhoti, and had long hair tied up behind his head. On two uncomfortable and shaking rickshaws, in about three quarters of an hour we reached Babuji's house.

The sun had gone down and Babuji was sitting in the middle of the courtyard, as he always does when the air gets cooler. Some Indian abhyasis were sitting around him. When I was in front of him, I put my luggage down and saluted him in the Indian style, no hand-shaking with Babuji, no kissing as we are used to in my country. Babuji looked up at us, and with a sweet smile said, "I am happy to see you."

Afterwards, somebody accompanied us to that part of the house that was reserved for the Westerners. It is a two-story building; from the staircase a door opens into a long low terrace, on one side looking over the courtyard and on the other side looking over the narrow dirty lane that leads to Babuji's house. The rooms are large and clean, there are showers with plenty of running water, and water closets which Babuji had had

made just for the Westerners, as here they use Turkish toilets.

Babuji takes great care of those who come and see him and is always attentive to their usage and customs even if this involves some sacrifice for him.

I was told that at a certain time he had started to renounce his milk because the foreigners that came to see him were used to taking milk in their tea, and he had to provide for it somehow, so he renounced his milk, even though it constituted the main intake of food of his meagre diet.

We all know how sparing he was in his way of living. For him and his family, only the strictly necessary, but to us he gave tea and biscuits every afternoon.

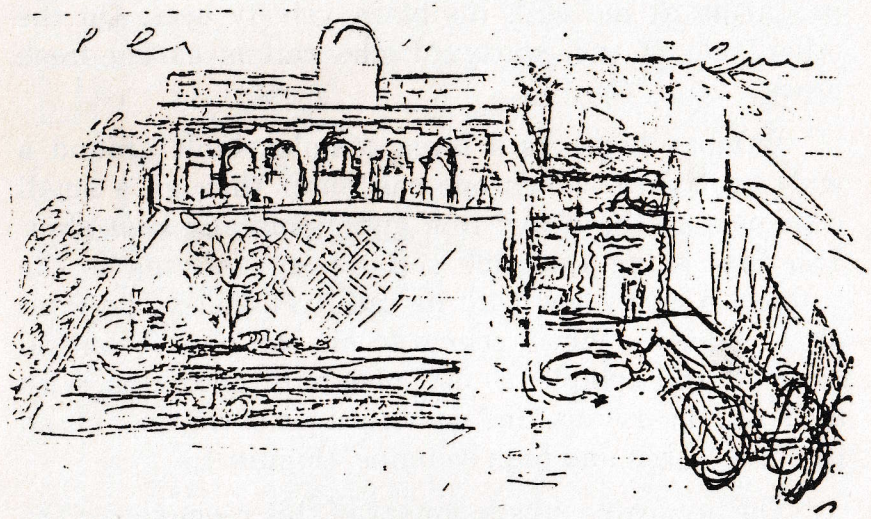
A letter was awaiting for me at Shahjahanpur, which filled my heart with love and tenderness. It was a letter from Chari: "Dear Toni," he was writing, "This letter is only to say hello! And to wish you a warm and affectionate welcome to your real home!"

Then he was telling me that Babuji had been seriously ill, but had recovered to such an extent that he was thinking to go to Europe in 1975. He was also telling me that he would be at Hyderabad for Babuji's 75th birthday celebration and that we would meet there.

How deeply touching was this love among sister and brother abhyasis that Babuji was spreading among his children. It was the sprouting of that universal love that he so much wished would develop in the heart of every human being.

SHAHJAHANPUR, OCTOBER, 1974

(FROM MY DIARY)



Shahjahanpur, October 1974
(from my diary)

9 OCTOBER, 1974

It is eleven in the morning. I am sitting under the porch in a low chair next to Master. He has just told me how to fill in the papers for the local authorities, now he is giving a glance at today's newspaper.

The atmosphere is calm and peaceful, time seems to have stopped and all the rest seems to have vanished into a kind of forgetfulness. Here I am, without words, without a wish, without being even fully aware of

having finally reached that source of water I had been looking for all my life. Now I have deposited my burden at my Master's feet. I have no question to ask, nor do I expect replies. All I wish is here. I feel like having lived all my life awaiting for this moment.

I am looking around me in a sort of far away condition. Someone is pumping water from the well. A child is staring at me with his black velvety eyes. On the other side of the courtyard, the calf is eating fresh grass.

Babuji's house is a large complex built around a wide courtyard, which one can enter through a small door next to the heavy iron gate, generally kept shut. The first thing that one can see on entering is the stable – a lovely cow with its calf lives there. The front of the stable – which seems to me the most beautiful room of the complex – is splendidly decorated with niches and carvings, and on both sides of the door stand two lovely thin and high columns. (Figure 1.)

The accurate embellishment of this room shows the sense of sacred value that Hindus give to this big and meek animal. The cow is also considered a pet animal for them, as our dog is for us.

Babuji personally ensures that they always have food and water and never fails to give them a pat on the back whenever passing near them. Once I saw him picking up some grass from near the well, giving it to the calf that was standing on the opposite side of the courtyard.

A few steps forward past the gate, the courtyard widens into a large quadrate, which is the very heart of the house. The porch, with its beautiful five arches,

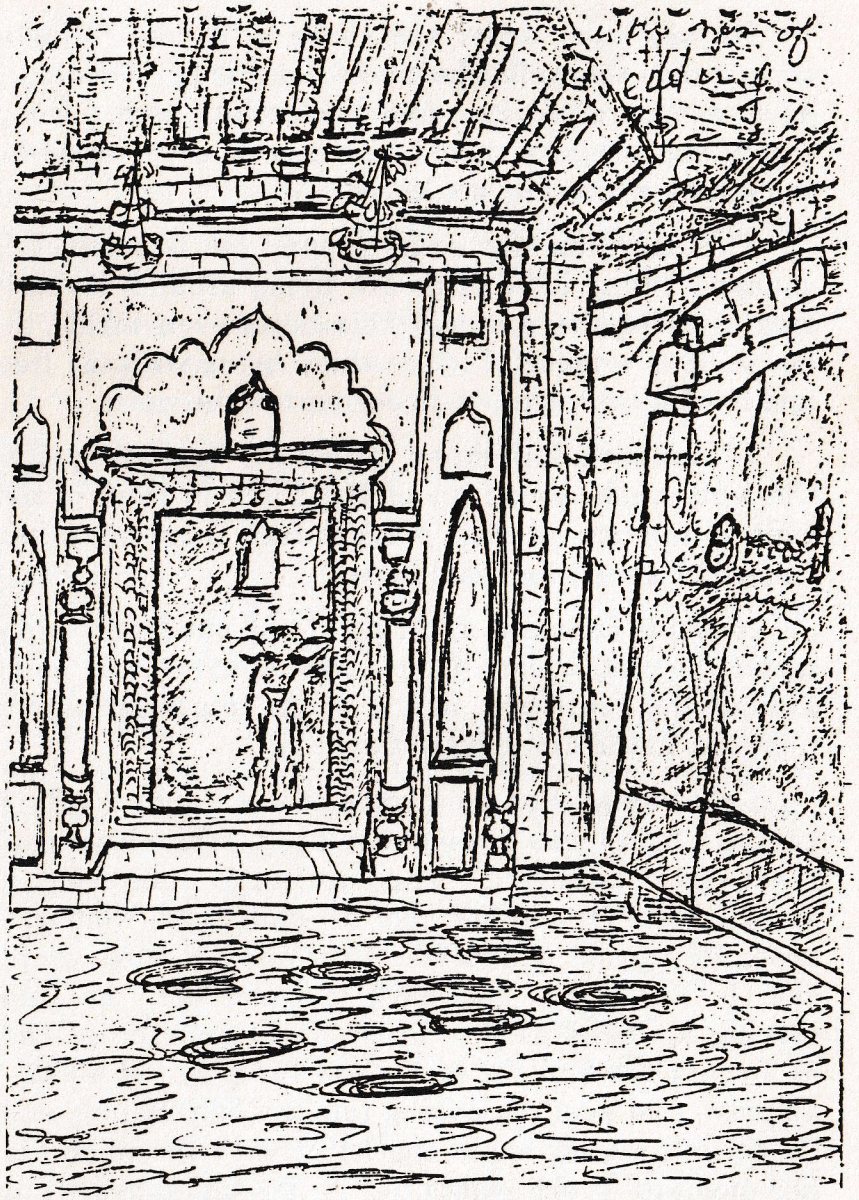


Figure 1: The Stable

gives the complex an air of uninterrupted continuity with the ancient and rich past of this land.

On one side, under the shade of a young sandal tree, stands the well. The whole place is pervaded with an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity, and I feel a sort of appeasement mixed with a mute expectation for something which I do not know.

This morning, the scene around me is completely changed. Many little birds are flying around, joyously singing. They have made their nests even inside the house. It is wonderful to see them living with us, free, and not kept in cages, as in our part of the world.

Last night a half dozen fat lizards were clinging to the whitewashed wall under the porch in front of me, waiting to jump on their prey. In fact, there are a nice variety of insects for them here.

A couple of bats were flying in and out from a place under the roof, while a mouse was undisturbedly going around the courtyard, and a small frog was happily jumping, in the dim light of the bulb.

I showed Master the photos of some abhyasis from Latina which I was given before I left. While looking at them, he was saying, "This woman is interested in spirituality." Of another one, he said, "This woman is good, very good," of another, "This one has some confusion in her mind. You have to clean her," he said, moving his hand as if to brush away something. And, as I could not find the letter and the photo of another abhyasi, and kept on looking into my bag, Babuji said, "It doesn't matter about the letter with the photo; let her meditate if she wants to." As for the abhyasi that was expecting a child, he said, "She can have transmission, all right." Then after a while, "Regarding her idea

that all events are contrary to her," he added, "it is not like that. On the contrary, she attracts them herself by thinking this way."

It is three in the afternoon. Birthe and I are sitting under the porch with Babuji, enjoying the peaceful condition we have been in since arriving here. I cannot tear my eyes from his loving face. His eyes have a far away look. The silence all around is filled with a mute language that talks directly to the heart.

Suddenly Babuji, as if following an inner thought, said, "Suppose a man lives 100 years and then he dies and be reborn after ten years. Those ten years have been ten years of rest, for getting strength to be confronted with another life."

Very often, Babuji gave replies even before the question was asked. After a long pause, suddenly, he looked at us as if coming back from a faraway place and, noticing the long red necklace that I was wearing, he asked me, "Is it coral?" "No," I said, "they are only wooden beads." Perhaps he was remembering that, while he was in Rome, Chari took him to Piazza Navona, to a shop famous for its coral jewels. I remember Chari said, "Coral looks beautiful on our women."

Birthe asked Babuji what happens when a person commits suicide. "If a man was to live sixty years and commits suicide at forty he will not be reborn before twenty years," replied Babuji. "In other words, the rebirth will be postponed by twenty years." In this regard, I remember that on some other occasion Babuji said that a person who commits suicide most probably would do it again in a subsequent life. It is as if the memory remains in the subconscious mind.

Then he told us the story of a man who wanted to see him in privacy, very badly: "I said, 'Okay'. When we were left alone the man started to cry. I said, 'Come on, tell me what you have to say.' And the man said, 'I have decided to commit suicide but before I did it, I wanted to speak with a holy man; then I will do it.' 'No,' I told him, 'You will not do it because if you do it you will kill also your wife and children. Can you do that?' I gave him thirty rupees and told him, 'Go home and start collecting children and teach them without pay, soon some more will come and you will have a job.' So that man went home did what I had told him and pretty soon he got a job, but he wrote to me saying, 'Yes, I got a job, but they will not pay me before one month.' So I sent him another twenty rupees," concluded Master with a smile.

Master is back to his chair. A man has just come. He is bending down touching Babuji's feet, although Babuji has said many times that he does not want anybody to do this. Master is talking with him in Hindi. He is the Director in charge of the construction works of the new ashram which should be nearly finished. Master said that he will take us there one day.

Peder, Birthe, and Karin have gone away. Before the arrival of this man, Babuji was telling us that he had asked the doctor whether he could travel to Europe the next spring and the doctor had replied, "Yes, provided you get a little stronger." But Babuji is strong and is following the construction works with much interest and attention.

At three o'clock, Birthe, Karin, and I went to the market. It is a terrible experience. Filth and flies everywhere. Open sewers run along the sides of the

dirty streets, giving a terrible smell. Children followed us in a crowd, laughing and shouting, "What's your name! What's your name!"

During my trip to Shahjahanpur I had formed an idea about this place where I was going, but I did not care. This was the place where my Master was and that was, for me, the most beautiful place in the world.

It is 8:00 P.M. We are sitting under the porch with Babuji. He is saying, "Desires are the cause of all effects... when ideas leave their boundary they become thoughts and when thoughts leave their boundary they become divine. The moment you get away from God, wishes prevail and one becomes their slave."

Someone asked Babuji what the difference is between God and Soul. "Soul is a sparkle of divinity," he replies.

How wonderful it is to live with Babuji under the same roof, in every moment of the day. He treats us like members of his own family. He is a father and also a mother and a teacher, but not the teacher who, as Tagore says, after having sold his merchandise and having received his compensation in the form a wage, has nothing more to do with his students. On the contrary, he sows in us the seed of spirituality and continues to nourish it with the strength of his divine transmission.

10 OCTOBER, 1974

It is ten o'clock in the morning. We have finished our breakfast. Babuji is sitting under the porch, bare-chested, and is speaking with the engineer, who is also an abhyasi. Someone has arrived now. Babuji gets up and follows him into the next room. It is the Indian

man that gives him massages. He is tall and thin, his complexion is quite dark, he has velvety smiling eyes and a double row of snow-white teeth. From the open door I can see his hands moving swiftly like two butterflies.

While Babuji was having his massage Birthe and I went around the house. There were thirty-seven rooms before the flood.

Presently we move to a room on the second floor. It will be cooler there. The room is bigger and there are three large windows which can be left open at night. There is also a nice view of the countryside.

The building on the left side past the gate is the family quarters. Through one of the front rooms and a short passage one enters into the inner courtyard. All domestic activity takes place here. Since early morning women start preparing the food on a large stone on the ground. Also in the inner courtyard there are arches on two sides of it. We have our meals in one of the adjacent rooms, lovingly served to us by Ninni, Babuji's most affectionate grand-daughter. A thick straw curtain is always drawn on the door of this room and inside it is quite dark. Sometimes Prakash, Master's eldest son, joins us at tea time.

Last night, Master talked to us quite a bit. In the evening he seems to be more talkative, though he complains that he does not remember things: "This part here is not working all the time," he said, touching the back of his head. "This part is okay," he added, indicating the upper part of his head. While speaking, he was not wearing his dentures, and we lost a lot of what he was saying. Talking about the world, he said, "Exaggeration of being is the definition of the world."

Master has called us in his room (Birthe, Karin, and I; Peder left this morning). The sitting was glorious. Yesterday he had told me, "You must not open your eyes immediately after the sitting is over, but wait two minutes so you can absorb the rest of the power."

"How do you feel?", Master asked me. "Wonderful," I said, unable to find a word to better express my condition. Then Babuji got up and went out. We three remained a little longer in this room, immersed in the deep spiritual atmosphere of the place. Babuji calls it "Lalaji's room". It is his "*pooja* room". (Figure 2.)

Figure 2: "Here Babuji gives the sittings..."

The seat where he can always be found is just outside the door. It is a rectangular room. Right in front of the door, there is a large foam cushion on which he usually sits, and near it, a lovely low desk with a pile of letters on it. Behind it, a window protected by iron rods looks into a muddy meadow, where some chickens and pigs are happily searching for food. The floor is covered with many layers of old cotton cloth. On the right side there is a cot on which sometimes Babuji lays down to have a rest. To the left, on the opposite side, there is Lalaji's bed, covered with a cream-coloured blanket with some golden work on it. The small low desk is composed of four marble pieces in a wooden frame. "It is Italian marble," Babuji told me when he saw me admiring the little desk.

We are again sitting under the porch. In this moment, Babuji is coming out of his room, saying, "Mrs. Davies has expired." I looked up at him in surprise, wondering how he had come to know it, but Babuji immediately added, "I have just received a letter from her husband."

Later on in the morning, Babuji said, "I feel very sad for the death of Mrs. Davies." We were a little surprised to see how Babuji was feeling sad, because according to Hindus, death is only a period of rest before coming to this world again, and we told him so. "Yes," he said, "it is true, but of course we are always sad when someone we know dies."

"Do you think that now she is near you?", I asked him. He looked at me thoughtfully and then said, "I will tell you after some time." I will ask him again later on.

7:00 P.M. We had a sitting with Babuji. It was marvellous. There were also some Indian abhyasis. Babuji is still looking sad.

The fan under the porch is noisily working. The light is on. The scene on the whitewashed wall has changed into the one with the lizards again. With their little glassy eyes they are cautiously moving, ready to jump on their unfortunate prey. Last night, the sight of these small creatures gave me the creeps. Tonight I find them almost nice to look at.

Since yesterday and almost during all the night, some singing has been uninterruptedly going on from a loudspeaker. "It is a way of worshipping Rama Krishna," an abhyasi is telling me. He has just arrived with his wife from a nearby place. It is a festivity which is going to last twenty-four hours.

Master and this abhyasi are both Hindus, but have a different belief. "I do not agree with their belief," Babuji said, "because they disturb all the neighbourhood. They should reduce it to four hours."

They have a long carpet bag. He is a nice man. His wife is a small lady, with a pretty face, black smart eyes. They have four daughters. Babuji accommodated them in a room on the left side of the porch.

Many abhyasis from Shahjahanpur come to see Master in the evening. They all bend down to touch his feet.

Mosquitoes are biting my feet. Outside the gate, on the other side of the narrow lane, the singing is going on.

Master had his supper and now is sitting with us. Birthe asked Master, "When a person dies, can you take the soul and put it at a higher place?"

"Yes," Babuji replied, "if it was a good soul. It is my idea that if you want to liberate any soul, it can be liberated, but in such case it must be a good soul. In the majority of cases it cannot be done."

Then I asked Babuji if Mrs. Davies was near him. "It is here in the chest ... I see the spirit ... I can visualise her ... she is near me, but I will not let her come to this world again."

"Dr. Varadachari was liberated."

"No transmission to dead persons, because those samskaras will come to you."

11 OCTOBER, 1974

This morning, immediately after awaking I had a wonderful vision, like a large surface of still water illuminated by a divine light. Strange things are happening to me. Yesterday, or maybe the day before, (I cannot say definitely because in this dimension it is quite difficult to keep record of the days) I was lying down on my cot with my eyes closed when Birthe broke in, speaking aloud. The sudden sound of her voice produced a series of rings inside of me, the colour of a beautiful bluish violet and bright white. Like when a stone is thrown into the water.

Yesterday Babuji started to send me to the "cosmic" – so he said. "Mr. S. was sent last year ... but he should give to others."

I am in a wonderful condition. If I close my eyes I feel like a grain of sand in a golden bowl.

We had a wonderful sitting with Babuji in Lalaji's room. When it was over he said to me, "Now you have crossed the Soul Region. I could have done it in three years and you would have enjoyed it, but you wanted it quickly and I have done it." Then he added, "Tomorrow I shall put you free." To tell the truth, I do not know that I wanted it quickly; perhaps when there is an intense craving, the soul itself becomes demanding; I do not know!

In this moment the telephone is ringing. Babuji looks at it like a disturbing object, then he picks it up and hesitatingly says, "Hello! ..." "Hello!", he repeats. The conversation stops there and he hangs up with a sort of relief.

Yesterday Ninni took us around their rooms upstairs. They are nice and large but almost bare except for a few dusty, black pieces of furniture. A few niches on the walls, some religious effigies and some photos of old relatives are the only 'interior decoration'. There are many ample sunny terraces. In one of them there is also a Turkish toilet hidden behind three half walls.

"Liberation is like family planning," Babuji is saying. We are sitting around him in silence, pondering over his words. Then someone asks, "Babuji, is the soul of a dog like that of a human being?" "Yes," Babuji replies. "It is exactly the same... soul is not a solid thing, it is only light and light can also be in the body of an insect. Light is everywhere... we are the same."

I was following Babuji's words from a somewhat remote place where my soul was dwelling in a blissful condition. I was feeling so happy that at a certain moment I uttered, "Babuji, I am feeling very happy."

Master replied, "It is good." For me it was a condition that no words were enough to describe, but for him it was simply 'good'; such is his simple way of speaking. 'Yes', 'no', 'good', 'no good'. His way of teaching without words touches the heart and when I couldn't do otherwise but tell him, "Babuji, how fortunate I have been to meet you," he said, "I also have been fortunate to meet you." Then I stood silent immersed in a condition simply impossible to describe.

I am sitting under the porch. The gurgling of Babuji's hookah is filling the atmosphere. His look is far away, lost somewhere. I am gazing at him. The chair on which he is sitting is full of dust, the cushions discoloured and dusty. His shirt has lost its candid white but he shines inside and out. Something 'great' emanates from him.

"Attachment and love are considered two different things," Babuji is saying. "Attachment is that which is not of spiritual nature...love to all human beings, to Guru, to our dear people, is spiritual." "Attachment is considered a kind of bondage which causes birth and death."

12 OCTOBER 1974

It is morning. The massage man has come. Babuji is sitting on a mat in the room on the left side of the porch. The man is pouring some oil on his hands and with swift movements is massaging Babuji's neck and arms. He smiles at me while massaging Babuji's body and makes signs to me that after he will give me a massage. Birth and Karin had their massage yesterday and when my turn came, Babuji said, "Let's go and have meditation."

Babuji has finished having his massage which lasted three quarters of an hour; now it is my turn. I asked Babuji what oil he is using. "It is Amla oil. It is made in the south of India." He added, "Olive oil is much better, but it is too expensive. Italian oil is the best, it costs five rupees." I told him that now in Italy we pay two thousand liras for a litre.

I had my massage. We don't do much walking here and I feel quite good.

I asked Babuji if I was a coloured woman in a past life because I feel a great attraction for this land. "Now I cannot say," Babuji replied. "Once, I could say it immediately, but now no more and then it is not necessary that you know, otherwise I should take away that impression from you. If you concentrate on a previous life and absorb yourself in meditation, then images start to come, but after you have to take off those impressions."

Last night Birthe and I sat under the porch with Babuji till late. As usual, he is more talkative in the evening. He looked fine. I pray to God to keep him in good health. I asked him if he had suffered when he heard of his Master's death. "Yes," said Babuji. "When I heard of it I felt like a pang in the stomach, like this," and getting up, he came near me and pressed twice his fist on my shoulder.

I read Babuji a letter that I had written to him before coming and which I never posted, as I was going to see him personally. When I finished reading he said, "Very nice letter." In this letter I was telling him about that young guru that at the moment was very popular in Italy. In this regard I asked Babuji how was it that, despite this guru's evident interest for wealth and the

material world, many were following him. "Fools are many in this world, so with publicity, all fools get together and follow something," he replied.

"I'm working on you," Babuji told me last night, "and you are travelling towards the fire chakra." "What shall I feel?", I asked him stupidly. "You might feel hot; it depends on the sensibility of the abhyasi," but this wasn't what I wanted to know.

Today two Indian abhyasis have arrived. They are brothers; one brought his daughter with him. Her name is Niru. She is sixteen years old and is very nice looking. Her skin is the colour of amber. She has black eyes and a very sweet smile. Prakash introduced them to me. One of them said that he had been in Rome some years back and enjoyed his trip very much. After a while, I decided to go to the market to buy some lemons. It is always a shock to find oneself outside Babuji's gate in the dirty lane with that terrible smell coming from the open sewers, flies, and the crowd of children that follow us laughing and shouting. I bought six lemons, each the size of a nut.

When we came back it was tea time. Also the newcomers had tea with us.

"Babuji, do you think that Lalaji will take care of Mrs. Davis?", I asked. "There is no doubt about that. God is everywhere, peace is with her."

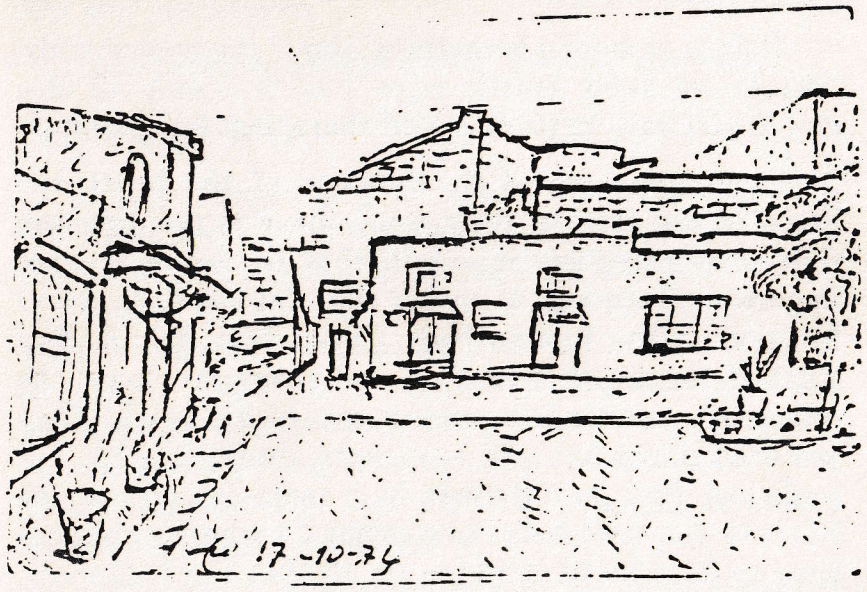
Also Prakash is sitting with us today. Unlike his father, Prakash is a tall and stout man with a voice that resounds in the whole house. He is a lawyer and has four daughters and two sons. It is a nice family. Ninni is very affectionate to Babuji. She takes care of his diet and once in a while brings him half a glass of

milk with five or six spoonfuls of sugar in it. It is his main nourishment.

Karin is making some photos. I did not bring any camera with me and I am making a few sketches to remember the place where Babuji lives.

13 OCTOBER 1974

This morning, after breakfast, when I came out on the courtyard I found six persons sitting with Babuji, including the two abhyasis who had arrived yesterday with the daughter.



The courtyard (seen from the porch)

Babuji told me, "Give a sitting to this girl; you can go in my room or in yours. I preferred to go to Master's room because it is full of spirituality. I sat on the floor and Niru sat in front of me. Babuji had told me, "No more than fifteen or twenty minutes," and I was wondering how I could know when the time was over. I told her to close her eyes and started with the cleaning, followed by the transmission. After some time, some birds flew noisily into the room, flying in a carousel over our heads, so I stopped. I looked at my watch, it was exactly twenty minutes.

I am sitting on the low chair next to Babuji. While he is speaking to one of the brothers, I am fanning him with a piece of paper.

Babuji is saying something about the causal body: "We do not know exactly were it is. It is only an idea and, if you have to plant a seed there, just imagine it.

Then, speaking of the function of the heart and brain in the human body, someone was pointing out that some scientists maintain that the brain is more important because it gives the impulses to every function in the human body. "Yes," said Babuji, "but what if the heart stops?" "... all ideas are here," he continued, touching the upper part of his head. "They are both important ... I have been thinking a lot, but could not find out whether it is more important, the heart or the brain! Anyhow, what I gather is this: we have to do a lot of thinking on all that the books say. We must imagine our thinking a real thing, either when we put things in the heart and also when we take them away. So when we suppose to put a seed in the heart, we have to see a seed in the heart. Of course the

seed is not there, but as you have put it there it works as if it were really there."

I have asked Babuji how can he know when a soul is liberated. A few days back he had told us that he had liberated the soul of his dog about twenty years ago. "That I cannot know ... it comes on you." "You mean that you see it like a picture?", I asked. "Yes, like a faint picture, very faint." "But the most important thing is to evolve."

It is 5:30 P.M. It is raining very hard. Babuji is saying, "When we are given a power we must be good disciples, beside having a good Master, otherwise we may use our power wrongly. But if Master is with us this will not happen."

"Telepathy is present among the saints in India."

14 OCTOBER, 1974

It has been raining all night. This morning after breakfast we went to sit under the porch with Babuji. After a little while Babuji got up from his chair, saying, "I will give you a sitting for ten minutes." The previous night I told him, "Babuji, we have not had a sitting for two days." "This doesn't really matter," he replied. "I am working on you all the time ... I am in your heart," he had said, smiling, "sitting there." Such was his way of working and that was why I was feeling in such a wonderful blissful condition.

But who was Babuji? Gazing at him while sitting in silence under the porch, I often wondered what was his real personality, what was his real abode. Sometimes I had heard him saying, "Many are those who come and see me, but only few really see me."

When the sitting was over, Babuji told me, indicating a point in his chest, "Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock," and he repeated three times, "At eight o'clock you will pass the Fire Centre. ... Vibrations will be stronger." Last night he told me, indicating the right side of the forehead (the temple), "I will keep you here for some time because I want you to enjoy it.

15 OCTOBER, 1974

The birds are flying all around our heads this morning. After yesterday's raining it is a little cooler and maybe they also feel it. One bird has just slipped into the rolled-up straw curtain on the door of Babuji's room. It must be nice and cosy there for a bird.

"Cosmic is a great power," Babuji is saying, "I feel I can break the mountains, I can stop the water." And as I was listening open-mouthed, he said with a smile, "Of course it is only a feeling, I will not do it, but the feeling is this."

Last night the weather had changed; heavy clouds thick with rains had started gathering, giving a leaden tinge to the atmosphere.

In the afternoon a row started among the women in the dirty narrow street outside Master's gate. It went on for hours. I think it started because of the children. When the men came back from work in the evening it continued among them. From the courtyard we could hear the shouting of men. The screaming of women and children became louder. I ran up to the terrace and saw a crowd of about twenty people ferociously fighting. Some had sticks in their hands trying to hit others. Some others were holding a man, who seemed to be the most furious. The terrace was only a couple of meters

above the pavement and it was just like being in the midst of it. I saw a man knocking down a woman, who fell on the side of the dirty street near the stinking ditch. Men with blood all over their shirts and faces, children crying, women screaming from nearby terraces. The atmosphere was full of terror.

All of a sudden, I saw a boy coming out from his house with a knife in his hand, running toward the fight. Seeing that, I also started screaming from the terrace of Babuji's house. Then I saw Babuji among them. The little fragile figure, holding himself on a stick, was walking amongst them, saying nothing. Prakash, who had followed his father out into the lane, was shouting to stop the fight, and for a moment it seemed that they were going to stop. But they started again, shouting and beating one another with their sticks. I was helplessly looking at Babuji, who kept on going up and down the lane among the screaming crowd. I was afraid they might hit him inadvertently. Then suddenly heavy drops of rain started to fall. In a minute the little lane had turned into a gurgling river; it was pouring down. Everybody rushed back into their houses. For a time the grouching still went on, then the thundering covered up all noises.

In the meantime the night had fallen and the sky had become pitch dark.

Karin was to leave with the midnight train and we were somewhat worried about her, because some stories had been going around about thieves who had assaulted trains. First class carriages were especially vulnerable because very few people travel in them and one could be the only passenger in all the wagon.

16 OCTOBER, 1974

In this moment, the man who accompanied Karin to the station has come. He tells Master that he found a good accommodation for her in a compartment with a young couple with two children.

I am sitting near the well while writing. The dog is eating some rice in a bowl left on a cot in the middle of the courtyard. It is a nice dog, the colour of honey; in fact, they call him Honey. He doesn't seem to like my company nor the company of the other abhyasis. When he saw that I was looking at him he stopped eating and went to hide himself behind a column. Now he has come back to the rice on the cot. I will not look at him so he can steal his rice in peace. He sleeps under Malin's bed in the passageway to the inner courtyard.

In this moment also a crow tries to break into the bowl but the dog rushes back and, snarling, chases it away. Then, a man rushes towards the bowl, and kicks the dog away. Now I see that it is not rice in the bowl, but something that most probably will be served to us for lunch!

In the afternoon Babuji took us to see the new ashram that is being built a few miles away from the village. It is located in the open country. Among the fields, the Meditation Hall stands superbly, with its singular entrances equal at the four corners of it, so that it looks the same viewed from any side.

Inside it is a large hall. On the side there will be a series of glass panels. In the centre, high on the wall, the emblem of the Mission will be installed: a round stained-glass representing the complete picture of the Sahaj Marg system. The swastika, at the bottom, is a

Sanskrit sign and shows the various ways of approach. The spiritual path proceeds through the mountains of difficulties that we encounter during our march, before attaining the highest point of approach. "Below it," Babuji wrote in *Reality at Dawn*, "is the sphere known as *Sat-pad*, where truth is predominant and is consequently a region of light though in a very fine state." Babuji spends long hours here, sitting in meditation, to charge it with divine power, so that people can benefit from it for many years after him.

On the other side there is a modern two-story building with showers and WC at each floor.

Babuji is sitting in his room and is speaking with the engineer. He was told us that sixty-five percent of the marble ordered for the floor of the Meditation Hall was ruined during the transfer from the train to the lorry. They threw it like pieces of stone. Master will send a cable to the company to stop sending it. They will have to send it by lorry.

When Karin left last night the rain had stopped, but the dirty streets were full of mud. In the courtyard the rain had washed away the cow-dung, and this morning the bricks of the pavement are nice and clean, and the air is cooler.

A black bird is flying low on our heads. The dog is looking at me with his shining eyes. Whenever our eyes meet he gets up and walks away. Now he has gone to hide himself under Malin's bed in the passageway to the inner courtyard.

Malin is a small sweet old woman who has lived with Babuji's family for thirty-seven years. She looks like a little girl who had grown old all of a sudden. Her face, full of wrinkles, seems like a small baked apple.

The sari she is wearing is faded and worn out, and much in need of being washed. She wears a little stone in her nose and drinks her tea out of a nice silver goblet. They are, perhaps, her only possessions. Malin takes care of Babuji's hookah. They are more or less of the same age. She is very affectionate to Babuji even though, when sometimes Babuji scolds her, she replies back with a harsh voice. They told me she has no name. They call her Malin, which in Hindi means the wife of the gardener. Babuji is very fond of her and once – I heard – she was nearly dying and Babuji healed her because he didn't want to lose her. She is a dear person. Every time our eyes meet she smiles at me.

It is nearly 3:00 P.M. I wanted to have a rest but I could not, it is too hot, the children down in the street make a lot of noise and the birds also are noisily singing. I gave a transmission to the abhyasis in Latina, then I wanted to meditate and observe my interior condition, but I felt very impatient, just like someone who is travelling and can't wait to get there. But where?! And when?!

It is 6:00 P.M. Babuji is moving to the centre of the courtyard. They have put an extra cot for the visitors who, at this time of the day, come and see Babuji. The dog is going around the courtyard sniffing. Now he is doing 'wee-wee' on the wheel of a bicycle leaning against the wall.

I feel somewhat strange inside – something like a fire, but it is not burning.

At this moment Prakash has come out shouting, as usual.

17 OCTOBER, 1974

I am sitting on the roof. I wanted to see the sunrise. It is misty and the sun is behind a fluffy chain of clouds, but the colours are beautiful. Behind Babuji's complex past the curve, the lane becomes wider, and from this side it is possible for a car to reach Babuji's house. A little further down, on a slope, runs the railway. On the meadow below it, some chickens and pigs are browsing around.

I look down at the terraces below on the other side of the lane, where most of the family life takes place. I can see the women, hair loose on their shoulders, moving about, still sleepy. It seems a living painting of Chagall.

The buildings are mainly made of bricks that have now taken a faded and dusty look.

Now it is 7:00 A.M. I could not sleep all night. My mosquito net must have been full of mosquitoes because they have literally eaten me. The heat was unbearable, notwithstanding the windows being wide open and the large fan running all night.

A dreadful howling had been going on all night. In the silence of the night it seemed to be sometimes very near, sometimes far. I found out afterwards that it was the watchman that Babuji hired. He pays him twenty rupees a month and the watchman goes all night around the complex, howling something in Hindi which means "Be alert, don't sleep, danger is around!"

A little later someone started to pray into a loud-speaker and after a couple of hours they started singing.

In the courtyard life starts very early in the morning. Between three and four A.M., beside hearing people moving around, coughing and spitting, I could hear a systematic 'bang-bang' which took me sometime to find out what it was, until I saw a woman picking something out of a large basin and throwing it in handfuls against the wall of the house, where it stuck like a nice decoration. It was the cow-dung which, once dried, is used for cooking.

The women look beautiful in their saris and their silver bracelets and rings. I have always wondered how is it that silver doesn't get dark on their skins, and it is always shining, while at home it becomes so ugly and dark.

It is 9:05 A.M. We are all sitting with Babuji under the porch. Master has had diarrhoea in these last few days and is feeling very weak, but this morning he said he is feeling better.

Some people arrived this morning, but they are not abhyasis. They came to take Master's sister. She is a very nice and delicate old lady. I was told that since her son married and went away, she started to talk to herself about her son, so the family decided to send her to her son. These people came by car to fetch her. They will reach home in a couple of hours.

This gentleman's name is Chandra. He told me that he had been to Rome and saw a pool where everybody threw money. "Yes," I said, "It is *Fontana di Trevi*." "I like Italy and the Italians," he continued. "They have a lot of traditions and they seem to really believe in these traditions, like if you threw money in that pool you would come back there."

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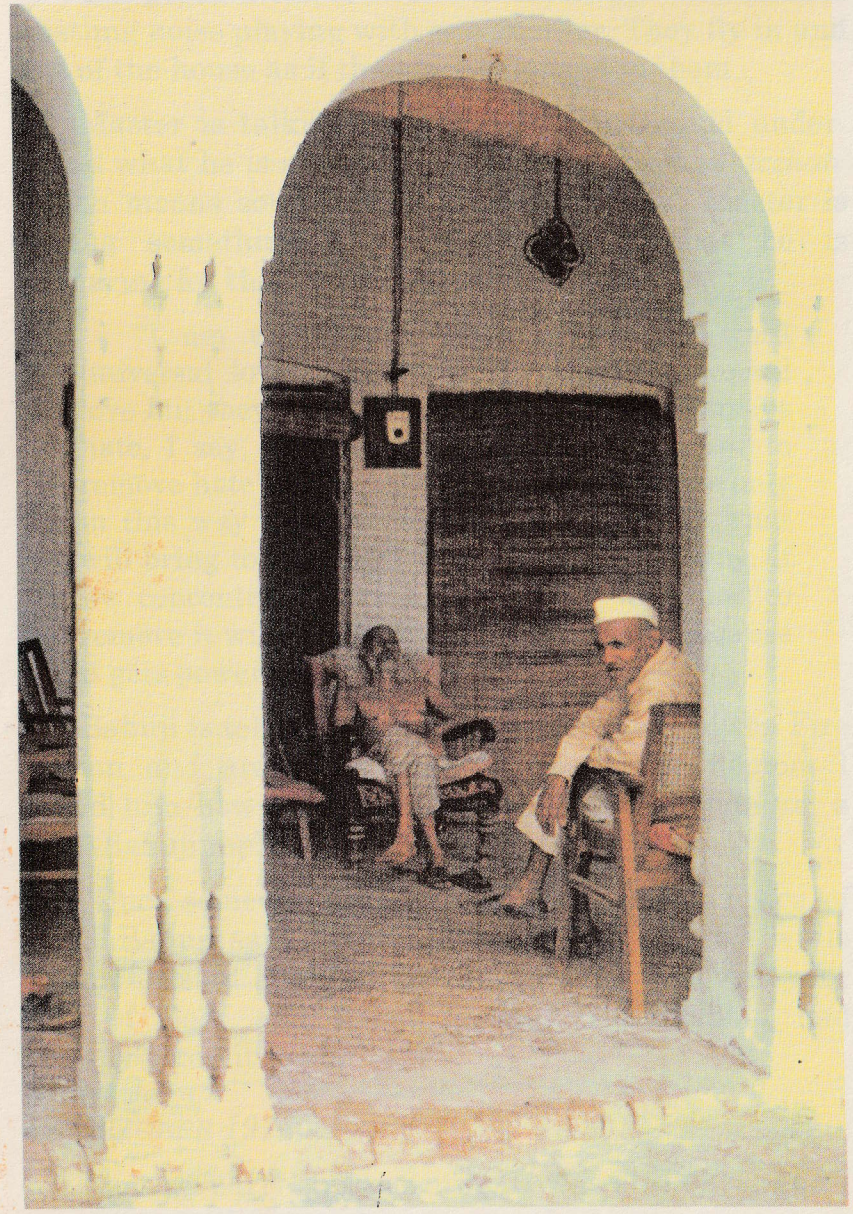

Shahjahanpur, October, 1974

The porch is full of birds this morning. They make a rustling noise playing with one another. They fly in and out of the house as if the place belonged to them.

Master is talking in Hindi. I wish I could understand what he is saying. The only word I get is *'acchah'* which means something like 'okay' or 'yes'. Master is saying something about the Message that he is preparing for the Hyderabad celebrations.

> "I am very happy when I hear the word universal love. Usually saints preach universal love but they don't tell you how to get it. Remove hate, I say, and universal love is there. How to remove hate? Simply starting to love because only in this way a power will be created inside, that will bring to a universal love in a natural way. If we concentrate on the thing that we want to remove it will indirectly become stronger, because it gets power by concentration."

Babuji is telling me, "Now you have passed the Fire Region and are going towards the Water Region. I asked him how long I would stay there. "A minute, a life," Babuji replied.

"Once someone asked Lalaji what was his idea of God," Babuji said. "Lalaji did not reply. After a while that man said again, 'I had asked you what was your idea of God,' and Lalaji replied, "I thought I had already given it to you."

18 OCTOBER 1974

I got up early this morning. It was still dark, and I was surprised not to hear any noise – no prayers, no singing in that terrible loudspeaker. I took some water from the bottle that Ninni gave us (boiled water); I

added some Nescafè and some condensed milk. I drank it – it wasn't so bad after all.

I gave a transmission to the abhyasis of Latina. Now I will go and have a shower. We will leave next Sunday by the night train and shall travel third class, which now is called second class. We have been lucky to find two berths, as two people from Shahjahanpur are not coming, so we shall occupy their places.

We didn't like to travel first class in a night train. No doubt, Master has arranged everything for us. Again, yesterday he had said, "I do not like first class in the night train. It is too dangerous."

This morning Birthe and I went to the Post Office. We had to send a cable to Clara to tell her not to come to Shahjahanpur because Master is leaving day after tomorrow for Delhi and she can meet us there. I hope she will receive the cable. Otherwise, she is going through this terrible journey, arriving here 4:30 in the morning, and she will not even be able to come back with us because reservation was not made for her, and now it is too late to do it.

After having been to the Post Office we went to the market. Now I have become used to the crowd of children that follow us laughing and shouting, "Tata, tata."

I bought six meters of white cotton cloth to roll around myself to feel cooler. I also bought a sari, which I will come and collect tomorrow, as I didn't have enough money with me.

It is 4 P.M. I am in my room. Since I have been here, I have had a pain in my shoulder because of the fan. This afternoon, while resting in bed, I did myself a

cleaning in that part that was aching, just for a trial. Then I forgot about it. I fell into deep meditation; when I got up the pain had gone.

Down in the courtyard it was very sunny (Figure 3.) and nobody was there. I sat down again pondering over my good luck still wondering how such a fortune could have happen to me.

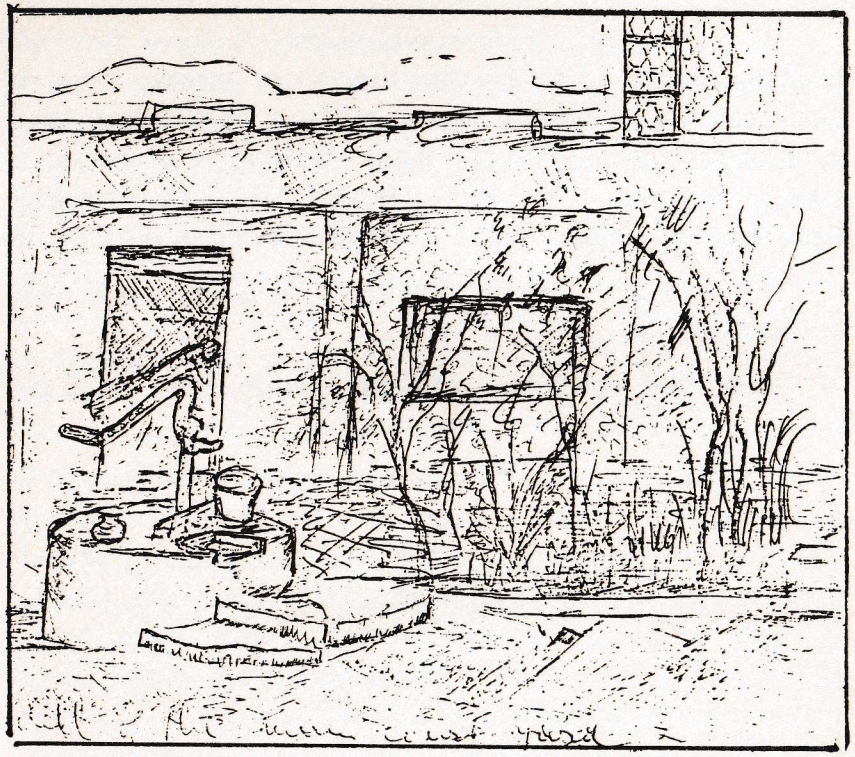

Figure 3: Il Pozzo *(The Well)*

Babuji said a few days ago, "The stones would not be rolling in the street if they were good enough for building."

I am experiencing a deep feeling of detachment mixed with an infinite peace, and now I wonder how stupid of me to have given so much importance to things such as flies, dirt, cow-dung, etc.. Now I feel perfectly at ease and I wish I could stay here forever.

Now I can see that Babuji has been working on me all the time. This little great man! He is the personification of Divine love on earth.

He says that he is working for Nature, for the transformation of humanity, and I am experiencing it personally. I remember that, when I had asked him something about my spiritual development he had replied shortly: "This is my work." I feel like having been washed inside out, in every single cell of my body.

A few nights back he had said, "What you get here you cannot buy."

I feel very weak, but very rich inside. Later I will go to the market and buy some bananas.

We had tea and now are sitting under the porch. I had wrapped myself around that white cotton cloth I bought the other day and felt nice and cool. I noticed that Babuji was staring at my dress once in a while, then he asked me with a somewhat embarrassed tone, "What is it, a petticoat?" I was amused, I thought I had put on a sari and instead I had come down in what apparently was a petticoat! I ran upstairs to change.

Babuji is not here. I am already in a sweat.

Last night Babuji went to bed early, so we could not enjoy his company. In the evening he was very busy with the folks that work for him out in the farm, and also with the engineer.

After dinner, I was sitting on a cot in the middle of the courtyard where there was a little more air. The boy that types Babuji's letters came to sit near me. He is twenty-five years old, of a very good nature, and very polite. He has a bachelors degree in science that he got in 1970 but up to now he hasn't found a job. He had not come these last two days and I asked him why. He said, "Because I was in the mood not to come." "When I am in that mood I do not come." "That's nice," I said. "I wish I could do the same in my office." Then he started saying excitedly in English that Maser loved him very much and treated him as his own son, but there were people not good at all in the office and, "They think that I am a servant, so when they treat me like this I do not come for a few days." Then he said that people in his country think that if anyone can speak with a foreigner, he is a "better person", "But I do not think so. Foreigners are not better than me. English, Italian, Danish are just like me." The poor boy was feeling very bitter and I felt very sorry for him because he is really good-hearted.

Then he said, "I had promised you to bring a nest but I could not go to get one. I'll go tomorrow or the day after." "For God's sake," I told him, "don't go and kill the birds to get the nest. I don't care to see it." But he said that he was not cruel and if he took one, it was only because the bird was not there. Then he told me the story of this nest. "Once, in the winter time, there was terrible cold and rain. A monkey was shivering for the cold. The nest of the bird was cosy, comfortable, and

soft to lay in, and the cold did not go inside. The bird, looking out of the nest, said to the monkey, 'You have hands and a good brain and you can make a house for yourself.' The monkey got angry and went up to the branch and broke the nest to pieces. So from that time on this kind of bird (they are a little smaller than a pigeon and of a pinkish colour) makes their nest right at the end of the branch where the monkeys cannot go."

19 OCTOBER, 1974

It is 11 A.M. Master said to me, "You have been thinking about a sitting since this morning so let's go and have it." The transmission was glorious. I felt floating high, without thoughts, without weight nor the feeling of the body.

There was only Birthe, Clara, myself, and two Indian abhyasis. When the sitting was over, Babuji told us, "Your conditions are very good today," and then while getting up, he added, "Exceptionally good, grace came down directly from above... did you feel it?" But no word came out of my mouth; I was simply unable to speak.

A few days ago a beggar arrived. (Figure 4.) He placed himself in a corner under the porch. He sleeps there and there they give him his food. I have been told that he comes once in a while, stays for some time, then, without saying anything, he goes way.

Clara didn't get our cable and arrived this morning with the 4:30 train. Luckily, Babuji, as if he had known it, had sent someone to the station to meet her. She had travelled directly from Rome to Shahjahanpur. On the train she had occupied the upper berth, the large fan going on all night, right on her face. She looked pale

and rather sick, and she told us that, after having greeted Babuji, she would go to bed. When we were sitting under the porch with Babuji, he looked at her and said, "I see that you look well." Birthe and I were both surprised, as it was so evident that she was not well at all. After a while Babuji got up, saying, "I have some work to do now."

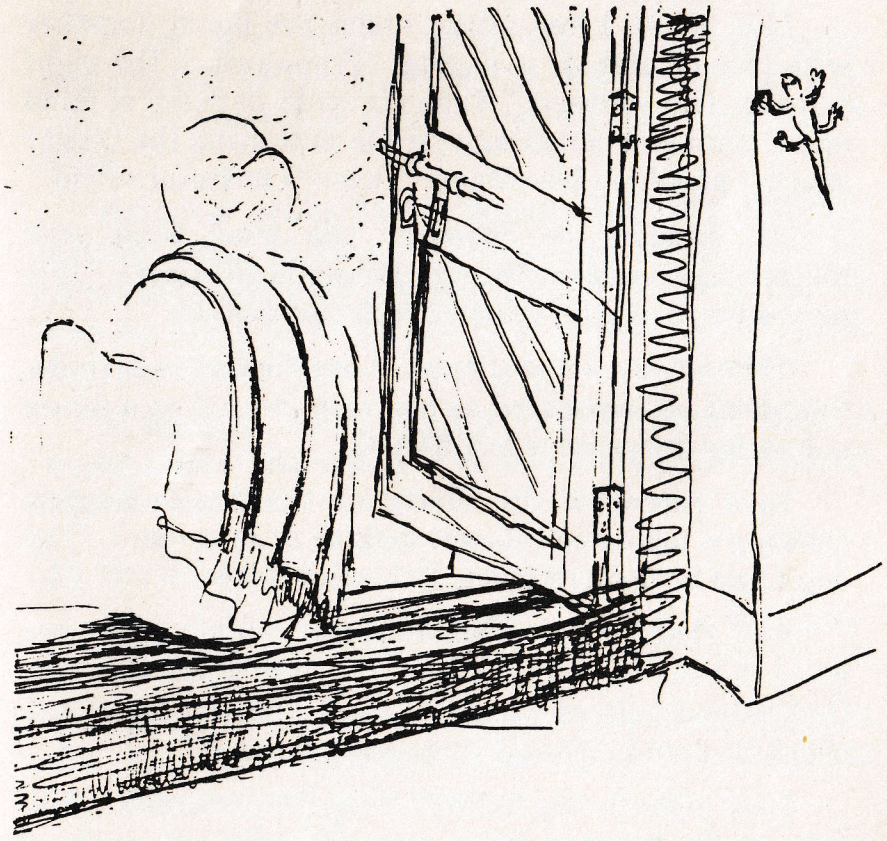

Figure 4: The beggar.

As soon as we were left alone, Clara jumped to her feet saying, "Come on, show me around." We were stunned. Just a few minutes ago she was on the point of collapsing and now she looked completely changed. All sickness and tiredness in her had vanished.

We had just witnessed how Babuji, simply saying a word, could make things change. Such was his divine power – this same power that he used for the transformation of humanity.

It is 8 P.M. I am sitting under the porch, together with others. Babuji is saying, "Pranahuti is the right word for transmission." Then we spoke of peace of mind and Babuji said laughingly, while indicating the beggar snoring noisily in his corner, "This is a peaceful sound."

"In January or February you must send your Master a letter of invitation," Babuji is telling me. "It is necessary to get the visas from the authorities."

Then after a short silence: "Love for God is devotion ... it must be considered as abstract and not as a figure ... love for the persons is different."

In a corner of the courtyard the dog is happily chewing a bone and Master, looking at him, said, "The dog I had before had stopped chewing bones."

And then: "Once I came across a man who didn't want to hear speaking of God. He said, 'First show me God, then I believe what you say.'" "What about blind people?", I said. "Should they never see God?"

Last night before falling asleep I experienced vibrations in the heart and this morning, still half awake, I experienced the same thing again. I have seen the seat of these vibrations: it was something like a faint shape of a heart immersed in water of a pale violet colour.

This morning I am reading in the newspaper that a strong earthquake has been recorded all over the world, but scientists think that it was not an earthquake but some nuclear experiment. The paper also reports that it was registered also by the Faenza observatory in Italy. Reading the name of Italy in a place so far away, I felt a kind of stir in my heart and for a moment I thought with love of that thin slice of land laying in the middle of the Mediterranean where I happened to be reborn in my present incarnation.

I am in a blissful condition. Light waves are continuously showering over me and the love that is filling my heart is so intense that my eyes are wet with tears.

Babuji is sitting here in silence. The gurgling of his hookah comes to me as a background sound from the immense expanse of the Infinite, and again I wonder who he really is; where and how is the place in which he is really dwelling.

If someone would ask me, "Do you know God?", I would reply, "Personally, I do not, but I know someone who knows Him."

20 OCTOBER 1974

I haven't written anything since yesterday afternoon. I feel very lazy.

Babuji left this morning towards ten o'clock in Harpal's car. Prakash's daughters and a boy from Shahjahanpur left with him.

Since early morning, everyone was busy in the house getting things ready for Master's departure. He looked very detached and far away. He was wearing his

black jacket over his white linen trousers, and on his head his usual white linen cap. Day before yesterday the barber had come, trimmed his beard and cut his hair, leaving just a few hairs at the back of his head (the sign that he is a Hindu).

Last night we sat with Babuji under the porch till almost midnight. He told me, "Now you are here," and touched is right temple. "I will keep you here for some time because I want you to see the pros and cons. This is a great power. Then, later on I will take you to the cosmic.

This morning there were a lot of people in the courtyard. They had all come to see Master off. From the room where we were having breakfast I saw Master going around with a big hammer in his hand. Then, bending down, he took his shoe off and started hammering on it. After having mended his shoe he walked away.

Babuji is very careful with his clothes and uses them till the maximum possible limits. I remember an episode told by sister Kasturi. It was the time when Babuji used to leave for South India to go and sow the seed of spirituality, as he says in his autobiography. "Rameshwar," Babuji told his brother abhyasi, "In a short time we are to leave. It is cold, my coat is old and worn out, and I have no money to buy a new one." "Don't worry, Babuji," replied Rameshwar, "I will unstitch it and turn it the other side." And so he did. When Babuji saw it he exclaimed, happily, "Now this overcoat will last me another twenty years!"

At the time of Babuji's departure, lots of people had gathered outside the gate, making it difficult for Harpal to do the maneuvering. We followed Babuji to the gate.

Then he climbed into the car, which soon disappeared behind the curve. About twenty minutes later the car came back. Babuji had forgotten his hernia belt.

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This morning, after Babuji had left, I went to sit in that low chair next to his, now empty. Malin was going around the courtyard; then she came near me and, with tears in her eyes, started speaking to me in Hindi, showing Babuji's empty chair. I did not understand her words but I could feel what she was saying.

One day I had observed her sitting on a jute sack in the middle of the courtyard, preparing garlands, which she folded and placed in a basket next to her. It was moving to see how delicately she picked up the flowers with her little rough hands. It must be her private activity from which she gets, perhaps, a few rupees.

I have been told that when Master scolds her, she replies back to him with a harsh voice, but she loves him.

We are leaving tonight by the night train. Prakash and two others from Shahjahanpur are coming with us.

21 OCTOBER, 1974

We are in Delhi at Mr. Sundara's house. Master is sitting on his bed. He looks fine. Many abhyasis are in the room. There is also sister Kasturi. I had never met her before but I had heard a lot about her. She is speaking with Babuji in Hindi, so we do not understand what she is saying.

Her voice is neat and clear, like the notes of a musical instrument. She has a beautiful voice and sometimes she sings her devotional poems to Babuji. They tell me that she has prepared a new poem which she will sing during the Hyderabad celebrations. When Babuji speaks of her, he calls her Saint Kasturi.

Babuji asked me whether I feel different. "Yes," I said. "I feel very different since I have come."

Babuji is saying, "Transmission is not electricity but can produce electricity..." only by thought. ".. I can give a lot of it." Babuji is speaking about electricity because there is an abhyasi who has prepared a lecture on the transmission. He is a young Executive Engineer and has given a scientific explanation of what transmission is. Now he wanted to add something about electricity and was asking Babuji permission to do so. In this lecture he was comparing the transmission to the phenomenon that takes place whenever a piece of iron is repeatedly rubbed against a magnet. Though nothing seems to have changed in the iron, nor the colour, the genus, or weight, nevertheless its qualities have changed and have taken up the same characteristics of the magnet. Similarly, with the transmission something happens and without adding anything the soul spiritual power is awakened. While, in the piece of iron, these qualities fade away with time, in the human being they will never disappear because of the Master's transmission.

When he had finished Babuji said, "It is a very good description of the transmission." Then to me, "I would like you to type it."

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When we left Shahjahanpur last night the streets were deserted though it was only 9:30 P.M. The few feeble lights were casting long shadows and the village looked even worse than its normal appearance. Squeezed inside the only old battered taxi of the place, we reached the station in three quarters of an hour. The taxi couldn't even get to Babuji's gate because the street was too narrow. The engineer and Prakash were with us. At the station we found two more abhyasis and a boy, all from Shahjahanpur. We walked to the other side of the station where the train was to arrive, trying to avoid the many bodies lying asleep on the ground. We had quite a long time to wait and the only bench was occupied by a large bale of kapok. The two abhyasis kindly removed the bale to let us sit down. When the train arrived it was overcrowded. People were laying in the corridor. Were it not for the two abhyasis, we would never have been able to find our berths. The places were occupied but they made the people move away. The boy slept on the floor across the door. Towards morning, many of the passengers on the train started praying aloud.

In Delhi, the train stopped at the old Delhi. It was a terrible experience to see so much poverty, so much dirt, beggars, and crippled. A woman came near us, uncovering a face disfigured by leprosy. I could understand the philosophy that sustains the resignation of these people.

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Birthe and I were staying at the Lodi Hotel. We had breakfast before coming to the Sundara's. For lunch we were invited to stay and had lunch together

with Babuji and sister Kasturi. Prabha, Mr. Sundara's wife, did not sit with us, but personally served the many dishes she had prepared for Babuji. In the afternoon, Harpal and his daughter Mina accompanied us to the Industry Cottage Market by car, where I bought some Indian silk and some presents for my people at home.

When we came back, the room was full with abhyasis. Kasturi was sitting near Babuji and they were talking together in Hindi. I sat silently on the floor looking at them. They seemed like two petals of the same flower. Then Kasturi spoke in Hindi to the Indian abhyasis. I could not understand but I could feel the immense bliss that filled the room. At a certain moment I grasped the word *'pani'* which means 'water' while she was opening her arms in a broad gesture, and I could feel the vastness of what she was saying.

Later Babuji gave a sitting. There were about forty people in the room. It was simply divine. After a while Birthe and I went back to our hotel. The following morning we had to be at the airport quite early.

22 OCTOBER, 1974

We are flying toward Hyderabad. Much of my time has elapsed but I still have a few more days to spend near Babuji. At the airport in Delhi we found a group of abhyasis that had come to say hello to Babuji.

Though the reservations were made on different days, we were all together with Babuji. Babuji can work wonders in making circumstances change. Even Clara, at the last moment, found a seat with us. The other abhyasis are travelling by train. Kasturi also is travelling by train together with her family. Very soon I

will see Chari, and I am looking forward to it. I have been told that Babuji has made him advance a lot and now he can also make preceptors.

The plane is flying smoothly over this wonderful Indian land. Babuji is occupying the seat in front of me. I can see the top of his head and feel lost in my eternal quest. Who is Babuji? Where are his thoughts dwelling? Where is his real abode? I feel an immense peace and happiness invading my soul.

It is 8:20 A.M. We are still on the plane and they are serving breakfast. We have just fastened our belts. It is cloudy and the land beneath seems muddy. Large spots of water can be seen in the distance.

At the airport many abhyasis came to greet Babuji. Someone put a garland around his neck.

The following is an article that was published by the Hyderabad Centre on the occasion of this celebration. It appeared in the *Indian Herald* newspaper, Hyderabad edition, on Wednesday, October 23, 1974.

> About 1500 members of Shri Ram Chandra Mission, from all parts of the country, will gather here on October 24 and 25 in connection with the 75th birthday celebrations of Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, the Founder-President of the Mission. Some overseas members of the Mission are also expected to participate in the celebrations.
>
> Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj who has arrived here today by Delhi flight and is staying at the local centre of the Mission at Domalguda.

The two-day celebrations will be held at Kutch and Jain Bhawans in Ramkote adjacent to the Eden Gardens.

The Mission, with its Headquarters at Shahjahanpur (UP) was founded in 1945 and has brought about an unparalleled revolution in the realm of spirituality. The system is known as "Sahaj Marg" and is a modified form of Patanjali's Rajyoga, eminently suited to the modern minds, not inclined to accept anything blindly without personal verification.

CENTRES ABROAD

The doors of Sahaj Marg are open to one and all irrespective of caste, creed or nationality. The Mission has Centres not only in India but in other countries of the world including United States, United Kingdom, France, Denmark, West Germany and Italy.

The unique feature of Sahaj Marg is the Power of Yogic Transmission or "Pranahuti" that is available to every aspirant from the Guru or Spiritual Master. Transmission is nothing but imparting of spiritual impulse in the heart of the aspirant which in course of time brings about total divinisation of man, and brings him perfectly in tune with his original Nature. Yogic Transmission works wonders in the life of an aspirant in months, which independent spiritual effort can't achieve even in decades. The spiritual progress in Sahaj Marg is completely in keeping with the jet age aspirations of Man.

On the occasion of the 75th Birthday of the Master the Mission is also bringing out a Souvenir with articles of lasting spiritual interest

written by the Preceptors and members. A purse is also going to be presented to Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj to facilitate early completion of Ashram building at Shahjahanpur, now in an advanced stage of construction.

SPIRITUAL POWER

This Ashram Building is not going to be just a brick and mortar but the very repository of that Spiritual Power of Yogic Transmission which represents the uniqueness of Sahaj Marg. The Adi Guru of this system, Mahatma Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Fatehgarh, was born on Basant Panchami and therefore during every Basant a three-day spiritual congregation is held at Shahjahanpur, the Headquarters of the Mission. Hundreds of members from all parts of the world gather there during Basant to receive the benefit of Yogic Transmission from the Adi Guru which goes on day and night without interruption on all the three days. One has to "Experience" first hand this transport to higher levels of consciousness to appreciate the full significance of the Power of Yogic Transmission.

This is an open invitation to one and all to participate in the Birthday celebrations and draw personal benefit from the presence of Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj in the twin cities in that connection.

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Now it is 3:45 P.M. I am sitting on the floor next to Babuji's cot at the Domalguda ashram. I have a pain in my back for the long hours spent in this position and I am wishfully looking at a large cushion lying against

the wall. As if reading my thoughts, Babuji tells me, "You can take it." Then, to the abhyasis present in the room, "These are my Western preceptors, Birthe from Denmark, and Toni from Italy." They were all smiling at us and were very kind.

It is raining continuously. The hem of my skirt is muddy and so are my feet. I have a pain in my back, but my heart is singing.

This morning after meditation somebody told us to go downstairs to have lunch. It was a large hall, full of abhyasis sitting on the floor in orderly rows; in front of each one a dry dusty leaf. Someone was passing along the rows, serving rice out of a big pail, and another one was following with a pail containing the vegetables. Unable to sit cross-legged any longer, with my legs straight in front of me and feeling terribly uneasy, I was staring at the dusty leaf between my muddy feet, where a small heap of rice had already been deposited, and couldn't make up my mind to bring it to my mouth. I was looking at the others who were politely mixing it with their fingers and was telling myself, "You'd better start eating now," when I looked up and met Lalaji's eyes, staring down at me from a large photo hung on the wall in front of me. He seemed to have an amused expression in his look, as if to say, "Come on, eat up. Don't be finicky; this is also part of the parcel, you cannot take only what you like." Then I felt ashamed and unworthy of their love and, smiling, I picked up some rice with my fingers. Then someone came, took my leaf, and poured all its contents in a round metal tray. Later, tea arrived in a big pail.

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The atmosphere is full of spirituality. Babuji's transmission is pouring down continuously. I am looking for Chari but nobody has seen him as yet.

Many abhyasis have arrived from all parts of India. Babuji's hookah has been prepared by an abhyasi, who later asked everybody to leave the room because he had to give Babuji a massage. Also I was going out, but he told me to stay and lay down on the carpet. I did so with great relief. I hadn't slept for the last two nights and my back was painfully aching.

Not far away some women were singing lovely Indian songs. Many of the attendants had already arrived and the ashram at Domalguda was full of abhyasis. But I hadn't seen Chari as yet. We sat for the evening meditation led by Babuji. It was simply divine. Transmission was pouring down in showers.

At a certain moment I started feeling a strong flow of energy coming from somewhere near me. When I opened my eyes at the end of the sitting, I saw Chari sitting near me.

Chari was, for us, the *trait-d'union* between the West and the East. He had received a Western education and could understand the difficulties arising from our kind of culture.

I remember that at the beginning, when meditation was still something complicated for many, Chari used to tell us that meditation wasn't anything alien to man, because man is always meditating on something: he meditates on how to make more money, on how to solve his problems, and even on how to cheat people. Man is an individual, he used to tell us, whose attention is always fixed on something. In a sense, he is meditating

all the time. All we have to do is to change the object of our attention which, in our case, is a 'light in the heart'.

That night, Chari took us to a restaurant in the city. With us also was B. Rajagopal.

For the two-day celebration, a large hall had been rented by the Hyderabad Centre at the Kutch and Jain Bhawans in Ramkote near the Eden Gardens. On Thursday 24th October the program was quite full. Lectures were given by many abhyasis. Kasturi sang the devotional poem she had written for Babuji, while transmission was pouring down continuously. Then Babuji read his Message on Universal love – the kind of love he wished most of all would develop among human beings in general, and among abhyasis in particular.

"The gist of Indian philosophy, as I understand it," he had written to me years ago, "is to think everybody as his own, and in that case there will be no bickering and no wars." Will this Earth ever become the place where such a wonderful love can really develop among the terrestrials?

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The next day, 25 October, the program went on more or less in the same way. Many lectures were given in Hindi. Babuji's transmissions were filling the place. I spent most of my time giving sittings. At the end of the celebrations all abhyasis gathered around Babuji as he was leaving the hall and we couldn't even say goodbye to him. So we decided to go back to Domalguda. Alas! My sandals outside the hall had disappeared. Barefoot on a slippery road, with mud up to my ankles, my long skirt splashed with mud, I was praying to Babuji to

make us soon find a taxi. Finally, we got to a place where we could get one, and went to see Babuji.

When we arrived at Domalguda, Babuji was sitting upstairs. As soon as he saw us, his face lightened with a smile that brushed away the small incidents and the tiredness of the last few days. Babuji was happy to see us and this was the only thing that counted. We stayed with him for about three quarters of an hour. He spoke all the time about a Guru whose followers had to swear and if anybody wanted to leave they were killed. So the Government obliged foreigners to fill in papers declaring where they were going to stay, and the people with whom they were staying were held responsible for whatever they did. For this reason, Babuji was recommending us not to send non-abhyasi people, and even abhyasis, only for a couple of days or at most one week, and only two or three each time. While speaking, he was smoking his hookah, and his short white beard enlightened his face, but he seemed to be very worried.

Later on in the evening we went to say goodbye to Chari. Birthe and I would leave for Delhi the next morning.

26 OCTOBER, 1974

It is 7:40 A.M. We are leaving Hyderabad. The plane is taking off and the view becomes wider every moment. The land beneath is beautiful in its warm colours, from the tender green of the gardens to the red bricks of the houses.

The many spots of water filled by the monsoon seem like large eyes open towards the sky. I have had very little sleep in these last few days. The hotel that was booked for us, under the beautiful name of Taj

Mahal, was a squalid one. The room was very small and had a small window with iron rods looking into a deep, narrow, dark compound. When I lifted the mattress, a dozen cockroaches ran away. But I have the sun inside my heart!

We had very little occasion to be with Babuji, but I remember that every time he could see us among the crowd he looked always very happy. And once, when I was trying to stand on the tip of my toes to see him, he motioned me to go near him, but I did not go. I didn't want to deprive the local abhyasis of their opportunity to be with Master.

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On October 29, at dawn, I left India, where I had lived an unrepeatable experience which, perhaps, was the only reason of my present incarnation. Now, with Babuji's help, my spiritual journey will continue.

At Hyderabad, in that large hall full of people sitting on the floor, the women in their coloured saris and the men in their white dhotis and kurtas – I have seen with my physical eyes a scene which haunted me for years before I met Babuji.

The flight was smooth, but the aircraft was an old one, and the seats had been mercilessly squeezed in such a way that there was hardly any room for one's legs.

We arrived in Moscow at 5:00 A.M. The landing strip was completely covered with a thick fog. For about three quarters of an hour the pilot tried to land, then decided to go to the National Airport. There, in the cold and humidity, we spent the rest of the morning.

More than once, they made us leave the plane with all our luggage and climb into a bus, and go back to the plane again, in a great confusion of orders and counter-orders shouted in their language.

It was the time when the cold war was at its apex, and it seemed that they had difficulties on how to make us reach the international airport without entering into the city. At the end, after being searched again, they made us climb into the plane once again and dropped us finally at the international airport. At last we could get our plane to Copenhagen, where we arrived at 12:30 instead of 9:00 A.M.

Elsabeth, Birthe's daughter, was waiting for us at the airport. I spent the night at Birthe's place. That night I had a strange experience. It was almost daylight. I could hear someone moving around down-stairs. I do not know whether I fell asleep again but my impression was that I was awake: I felt that the back of my body was suddenly shaken by a violent electric current, running from head to toe and back to my head again, in parallel bands, along both sides of the spine. These currents went up and down my body five times, and each time they reached my head, I felt my neck shrinking into my shoulders, while my eyes automatically squeezed in an effort to bear such a violent shock. I was not feeling any physical disturbance. I was calm all the time and not scared at all.

30 OCTOBER, 1974

It is 12:00 A.M. I am at the Copenhagen Airport waiting for my flight AZ-397 to Rome via Milano.

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"What did you study at your Master's place?", my boss asked me when I went back to the office. "What did I study?" How could I make people understand that I had studied nothing, and that what I had brought back with me wasn't anything that had passed through the neurones of my brain, but that it had been absorbed in a mute language directly by the soul. "What you take here you cannot buy," Babuji had said.

Shahjahanpur, October, 1974 (Author at right)

BABUJI IN ROME – 1976

After my return from India, for some time I experienced a kind of aloofness, which puzzled me. It seemed to me that I had lost everything, though I could feel very deep down a kind of expectation for something to come. And Babuji's words were coming back to me: "It takes time before you can digest what I have given you." And it was really so. As the hungry man does not feel the hunger any more after a good meal, the same was for the food of the soul. The soul was resting, quietly engaged in absorbing and digesting the abundant food that it had been given during that period. I kept on writing to Babuji but he didn't reply to my letters any more, just like a mother does when the time comes for her to stop feeding her child from her breasts.

Then, slowly, the treasure that I had accumulated in me started to shine. It was like observing an underwater current through a limpid and transparent surface. The points that Babuji had cleaned started to manifest the qualities proper to their nature, which we all have, even though covered under thick layers of grossness.

In that period, and for some time, strange things happened and occasionally I found myself healing people. But on this subject I do not wish to add any more. I used to write to Babuji, and when he came to

Italy one day he asked me to heal the pain he had in his stomach.

As one walks along the spiritual path, many faculties are awakened in a natural way, but Babuji used to take away any knowledge of it. And this, for two main reasons: first to avoid growing of the ego. According to the Sahaj Marg teaching, the ego is not to be destroyed nor to be mortified, as it is commonly believed, but only to be purified. The ego plays an important role in each one's existence. "We only have to clean it and to purify it."

"We have to take away all the coverings that we ourselves have hammered around it since we came to this world for the first time," Babuji wrote in his books. "In the common man every action is related to his body and this is the grossest form of existence. As we go along, if our Master has the power of transmission, then the ego becomes subtler. It starts losing those crusts that he himself has deposited on it through his actions and his behaviour, and finally assumes that pure condition as it was at the time of creation. The second reason is that these qualities disappear by themselves as we proceed, because they are part of what is left behind, while we have to look ahead to reach the destination. This is the extraordinary work that the Master does for the spiritual evolution of the abhyasis.

In this regard, I remember Babuji's words when I asked him if I had been a coloured woman in a previous life. He replied, "When I was training I could tell immediately, now I am not able."

In 1975, Babuji could not come to Europe. His health was not good enough and he had to postpone his visit to the next year.

In fact, in 1976 he came to Europe accompanied by Chari. The program was that they would first go to Denmark and then to Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy. Afterwards, they would return to Denmark, and from there they would fly back to India. Those who could do it would accompany Babuji and Chari during their itinerary through Europe. Also, from the States some abhyasis arrived to follow Babuji and Chari on this journey.

I took a few days leave from the office and went to see Babuji at Etoy in Switzerland, where he and Chari were staying with Stella Jaquerod. I could speak with Babuji on how Sahaj Marg was developing in Latina, and I asked him whether it was possible to have two more preceptors. Babuji agreed immediately and Rina and Anna Maria Rizzo were made preceptors, after having promised that they would work for the Mission.

That year I had the extra luck to go and see Babuji even during his stay in France, before coming to Italy. An unexpected trip to Geneva for work allowed me to make a short visit to Sanary. Unfortunately, I could see Babuji only a couple of times, and from afar. He was staying with Andrè Poray, who didn't let anyone go into his house and Babuji could be seen only when he came to the campus. I was told that Babuji had a beautiful room with a large window looking over the sea. But he did not look very happy.

At last the turn came for Italy to receive Babuji. On June 1st, 1976, Anna Maria and I arrived at the airport, from Latina, when Babuji and Chari were just about to

climb into Mr. Saravanamuttu's car, with whom they were staying.

Finally Babuji was in Rome and would stay here for the next ten days. The program included a couple of days in Latina, where Babuji and Chari would stay with me in my house. That was a special gift from God for me. Even now, while writing of those days, I cannot believe that I had such a great fortune and feel a pang of sorrow for those days that are gone.

In Rome, Mr. Saravanamuttu accommodated Babuji and Chari in a large basement room. Many abhyasis were sitting in silence. Babuji was laying down on his bed, suffering from a strong pain in his stomach. He asked me to heal his pain. I was emotional at having to work on Babuji and I did it with all my heart. After a while Babuji said, "Pain subsided," but a little later Babuji told me, "Pain has come back." Every time I tried pain "subsided" but soon came back. I felt sorry not to be able to heal him for good.

At the time, I was living in Latina and my flat in Rome was free, so I could give hospitality to a few abhyasis.

Every evening I was supposed to go back home, but inevitably something would happen that prevented me or created circumstances that prevented me from going home. It was as if his love exercised a kind of magnetic force that pulled me back.

At last, one evening I had to go. I had deserted both my husband and my boss for a time and I could not procrastinate any longer. So that evening, after having said goodbye to Babuji and Chari, Anna Maria and I left for Latina. But something really strange happened.

I had left Rome and was driving towards Latina when I found out we had a flat tyre.

I stopped the car at the side of the highway and started to pull out everything necessary to change the tyre, while Anna Maria was trying to stop someone to help us, but the cars flashed away without taking any notice of our signals. So I tried to do it myself, but the tyre was very heavy; the lug-nuts were too tight, and the jack wouldn't stand. I didn't know what to do. At a certain moment, I noticed that a big dark-coloured car seemed to slow down. As it got nearer, it was evident that whoever he was, the man had the intention of helping us. Thank God someone was coming to our aid.

With relief we greeted him, but he, completely ignoring us, without saying a word, and without even looking at us, pulled out of his car a large wooden wedge which he placed behind one of the rear tyres so that the car would not move, and started changing the tyre.

I can still see him, a distinguished tall man in his forties, wearing a white shirt and tie and a heavy gold watch around his wrist. He could have been a manager in one of the factories of the area. When he finished, without saying a word, he climbed back into his car. Still ignoring us, and completely indifferent to our words of gratitude, in a flash he turned his car and disappeared, leaving us open-mouthed. He was driving at full speed on the wrong side of the highway where, especially at that time of the day, traffic was very heavy. We were simply stunned. Incapable of saying a word, I picked up the large wooden wedge that he had forgotten on the pavement, climbed into the car, and we continued our way towards Latina. I couldn't help

thinking about what had just happened. The two directions of the highway were divided by an uninterrupted iron guard-rail and it was therefore impossible to pass in the other direction.

All evening I wondered where he had come from and where he was going to. I was astonished and, in a way, irritated with Babuji, who was putting me in front of strange things which I could not understand. Hundreds of cars were travelling our direction; still, no one had stopped except this one, who apparently had come for the specific purpose of helping us! There certainly must have been an opening in the guard-rail that would let him pass in the right direction. I would check the next day while going back to Rome.

The next day I searched in vain for an opening in the guard-rail. The guard-rail was continuous and uninterrupted till "Pratica di Mare." That is ten kilometres from the place where we had stopped with a flat tyre.

When I arrived, Babuji was lying down on his bed. Some abhyasis were sitting in his room. I sat down on a chair near him and, still stunned, I started to tell about the incident of the previous evening. Babuji was listening in silence, but he had a mischievous smile at the corner of his mouth, as if he was amusing himself. Then he said, "You shouldn't say these things," but I was only reporting the facts as it happened, without any comment. It was clear that he knew exactly how things had worked out.

Also, a few evenings before, when I had to go back because there was something wrong with the car, Babuji was very happy and told me with a smile, "I was

thinking of you and my thought brought you back to me."

How could I ever forget Babuji, when every word that he spoke, every minute that I spent with him, and all his teachings are present in me in every moment of my day with the freshness of the present.

But who was Babuji? It was as if two different personalities were present in him who manifested themselves in parallel. One was that of a loving old man that excited love in whomever he met. The other one was something inexplicable that was arising directly from his soul. Many a time I have heard him saying, "Many come to see me but very few really see me."

He himself spoke of a 'Special Personality' but he never said who this Special Personality was. "There is only one or two at a time in this world," he used to say, and when Dr. Varadachari specifically asked him, his reply was:

> "I do not, my dearest brother, claim in any way to be the messenger of God nor the special personality, but only as one of the humblest servants of humanity. May God grant me strength and means to play my part well in this respect. I say only what I feel and believe when it comes to me automatically. Trusting my associates full well I open my heart to them without any reserve... You are perfectly justified in disbelieving it unless you have experienced it personally." [...]
>
> "I only try to invoke God's blessings by means of prayer through the medium of my Master. In case I apply my own insignificant force for the

purpose, my thought gets connected with the Main Channel in prayer for the accomplishment of all that is needed in the aspirant..."

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On the 5th of June, Babuji was due to come to Latina. But he had a very disturbed night. So, early in the morning he told Chari to cancel the visit to Latina. But later on, he told Chari that Lalaji wanted him to go to Latina as planned. So, thanks to Lalaji, I had the immense fortune of having Babuji staying with me.

It had been raining all night and kept on raining all day. When Babuji arrived, there were already three French abhyasis in my house and a few others from Latina.

I had given my bedroom to Babuji and Chari, and my husband and I slept in my studio upstairs. On Babuji's bed I had put a white 'peluche' blanket. Babuji looked very happy. I can still see him, while lightly passing his hand on the 'peluche', saying with a smile, "How soft it is." That evening I had prepared spaghetti for everybody. Chari used to like my spaghetti.

In the afternoon I had organized a public meeting at the Centro Culturale di Latina and the place was quite full. Chari spoke on "Cleanliness and Godliness." Afterwards, Babuji gave a transmission to all those present. Later in the evening, at home, two more abhyasis arrived from Naples. Their love for Babuji and their enthusiasm was pouring out from their hearts. They had come just to see Babuji and would leave for Naples within a few hours.

Babuji looked very happy, "They have travelled all this distance to come and see me!?", he was telling me with the innocence of an infant.

When they left, Babuji walked to the door with them, and I heard him laughing happily when the Neapolitan, under an impulse, embraced him warmly.

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That night my house was blessed by God. Babuji's presence filled my house with an intense atmosphere of spirituality. Throughout the night I could feel a quiet motion of long smooth waves in the depths of myself.

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Babuji slept well all night. When I came down in the morning I found Babuji and Chari in the kitchen standing in front of the *piattaia* right open (it is a cupboard with a grill on the bottom, hanging on the wall over the sink). Chari was explaining to him how the plates, after being washed, were placed perpendicularly in there, so that the water would drip into the sink below, and Babuji, looking at me, exclaimed in admiration, "What brains you Westerners have!" He, who knew the secrets of the world, was looking in admiration at a stupid piattaia, judging us "great brains"! It was simply moving – the purity and the innocence of this humble, little, great man.

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The abhyasis that had come from outside slept at the Rizzo's place, who owned a villa in the middle of a

large vineyard. The next day the meeting would be there. Their mother had prepared food for everybody. It was a large gathering, including some French and American abhyasis. Babuji was resting in Rina's bedroom while, in the lounge, preceptors were giving individual sittings. I was going in and out of Babuji's room and in one of those times, Babuji told me with a smile, "Whenever you enter the room, I feel your transmission."

I do not know what he meant. I only knew what I was feeling in my heart, which I cannot nevertheless explain. It was as if every particle of my being was floating in a sea of love and bliss.

On June 7th I took Babuji and Chari back to Rome. It was still raining. Babuji was silent all the time. At about halfway between Latina and Rome, I had a strange experience. I felt like a needle penetrating from my throat to the back of my head.

Back to Rome I still had four days to spend with Babuji. Many young people arrived from Naples, among them, one with quite a few problems. Babuji told me to give him a sitting and clean him thoroughly. It was a special case, and I asked him, "Where?" "In all points," replied Babuji.

That evening Babuji told me, "I didn't give you any sitting, did I?" "No, Babuji," I replied, "You haven't given me any individual sitting." "Then, let's have it," Babuji said. We were in the large basement room at Saravanamuttu's; many other abhyasis were present. I closed my eyes and immediately a subtle shower of divine energy started flowing upon me. I felt my breath slowing down, and at a certain moment it seemed to me that it had stopped completely. I was immersed in a sea

of peace and bliss. It didn't last long, perhaps fifteen minutes. I told Babuji of my experience, and he seemed to be very happy and said, "When I was an abhyasi, I never knew where I was." And when Chari entered the room he told him, "Toni enjoyed her sitting."

On June 10th 1976, Babuji left Italy, where physically he would never return.

INDIA – 1977

In 1977, I had reached my pensionable age. Finally I was free from all engagements and commitments that had always conditioned me.

I bought myself a camera and a good stock of film and at the beginning of October I left for India to go and see my Master. I was travelling alone and this gave me a wonderful feeling of independence. Nobody was happier than me.

This is what one believes when one is finally free from what is considered a bondage. But it is only another *bhog*. We are simply starting living another page of a book we, ourselves, have written in a time of which we have lost memory. It may be good. It may be not. Anyhow, if one has a Master, a real Master that has the power of transmission, then the bhog will be easily overcome in a less hurting way.

That year many things happened to me. I had strange experiences, certainly connected with my samskaras. If everything which happens to us is due to our karma, we cannot avoid them, but they can be made much lighter by Master's cleaning and transmission.

When we said goodbye at the airport my husband had tears in his eyes. I had not told him when I would come back. I did not want to be conditioned and I

wanted to enjoy fully that sensation of freedom, which I had never had in my life.

In Delhi all hotels were full. I learned that in India, all advents, like meetings, conferences, etc., take place in October and November when climatic conditions are most favourable. I telephoned to the Sundaras and they kindly offered me their hospitality.

I spent a couple of days in Delhi waiting to get a seat on the train for Shahjahanpur. I went to see the Red Fort again, wandering through the beautiful gardens and palaces.

When I arrived in Shahjahanpur the sun had already gone down and night was approaching. Babuji had been advised of my arrival. I had been told to wait at the station, that somebody would come to meet me.

Shahjahanpur looked exactly as I had left it three years back: along the railways, the usual large bales of kapok, waiting to be loaded on some train; the usual crowd laying on the pavement, and all around an air of smoky dust. Outside the station, amid the noise of the rickshaw bells, the usual confusion of people wandering about the sweet stalls. A small crowd had gathered around me and I was beginning to feel rather uneasy. Finally, Gunde Rao arrived. We climbed into a rickshaw and the boy started pedalling towards Babuji's house.

One the way, Gunde Rao told me that Babuji had been talking about me, saying, "She is a loving lady."

Babuji was happy to see me but this time I could not stay in his house. The ashram had been completed and everybody had to stay there. So the rickshaw boy

was told to take me to the ashram, which was out in the country not far from the village.

A large iron gate opened on a lane flanked with flowers. At the end of it the Meditation Hall stood majestically. In front of it, after a short space with flower beds, a large two-story building was the dormitory for the abhyasis. On one side, a few feet above the ground, there was the kitchen – completely open on the front side – where food was prepared on small earthen fires on the ground.

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That year, Babuji did a deep, thorough cleaning on me, eradicating tenacious impressions. I could see them flying almost in front of him and I was feeling uneasy.

In the ashram there were some French abhyasis and a few other Westerners. Two Indian abhyasis, Krishna and his wife, were permanently living at the Ashram and took care of the abhyasis that came. Gunde Rao was staying with Babuji.

A few days later, Babuji had the news that Mr. Saravanamuttu was arriving from Rome. That year I had the pleasure of seeing Chari as well. He was travelling North on business and had come to see Babuji. Chari spent a few days in the ashram with us and before leaving, he invited me to Madras. As I had plenty of time at my disposal, I was happy to accept his invitation. Chari suggested that we could meet in Nagpur, where the plane was to stop, and proceed together to Madras.

I went back to Delhi. One afternoon, I had just finished my meditation and was laying down on my

bed, with my eyes closed, when suddenly, from the dark of the visual plane in front of me, a face emerged. A large face, as a close-up image on a kinescope screen: two greedy eyes staring at me, thick eyebrows, aquiline nose, the corner of his upper lip bent in an ambiguous expression. The contour of his face faded into the dark background from which it had emerged. I was stunned and, almost aloud, exclaimed, "And who is this?" It was not a quick vision. Whomever he was or whatever this face meant, it stood there staring at me for some time with an ambiguous expression in his eyes. Then it disappeared. I did not pay much importance to it and did not think about it anymore.

I still had a few days at my disposal before meeting with Chari, so I thought to utilize the fix-priced ticket I had bought to go to Madras, and also to visit some other place. Prabha suggested that I should go to Kashmir.

The day after, I left for Srinagar. At the airport, many agents were offering board and lodging in house-boats. I chose one who seemed to have a more reliable aspect. The name of his houseboat was "Queen." It was a beautiful and very comfortable houseboat. On the front side of it a large wooden platform provided an easy mooring to the *shikaras*, from there a few steps brought one into the houseboat. The owner, who was the same person that I had met at the airport, had organized a program for my two day stay in Srinagar.

The Kashmiris say proudly that Srinagar is the Little Venice of the East. Along the canals, amid the thick vegetation, old houseboats were inhabited by local people. I was told that they used to be the summer

residences of English officials who were, by law, not permitted to own houses of brick and stone.

The houseboat I was on was made with a kind of pine called 'deodar'. A fine resinous smell permeated the whole interior of the houseboat, which was finely carved on every inch of its roof, sides, balustrade and all, as it is the classic style of Indian art.

Immediately after my arrival, a *shikara* came and took me to one of the canals where, in tiny little shops, a variety of goods and souvenirs were sold. I bought an embroidered gown. In the meantime the night was approaching, and in the twilight the shikara was smoothly sliding on a perfect still surface, where the sky seemed to have sunken into the depths of the water. The branches of the trees opened their foliage, narcissistically bent on their own image. It was a fantastic fairytale vision, where the shikara seemed to be floating, suspended between sky and water in an enchanted woods.

Where the canal stretched into the lake, large expanses of aquatic vegetation covered the surface. These plants constitute a large resource to the local people. They are used as fodder for animals and cover-age for roofs and huts. The roots down in the muddy bottom are good to eat.

On the floating gardens grow all kind of vegetables, and at sunset the women, skilfully pushing their shikaras through the rich and thick vegetation, go to water their floating gardens, dressed in their bright coloured robes, adorned with bangles and necklaces, their hair tied under a kind of *foulard* that runs along their neck and spine. They seemed like living paintings

of the great Cosmic Artist, in a paradise of silence between sky and water.

The following day, my program was to spend the whole day on a shikara around the canals. The boy would also prepare my lunch on the boat. He was telling me that in May, water lilies and nymphets are all in flower and the scenery is much more beautiful. Now the plants had acquired that brownish autumn colour and I would have really loved to see them in their full bloom.

It was the beginning of November. In a short time the airport would be a strip of ice and the planes could not land anymore.

I was the only guest on the houseboat. In the evening, after dinner I was sitting in the drawing room. The owner came and started to ask me questions about my country. While speaking, he was sitting on the floor and the dim light of the bulb fell on his face in such a way that only his eyes, nose, and mouth were illumined, while the contours remained in the shade. I was shocked to see that it was the same face that had appeared to me while I was still in Delhi, and didn't even know that I would come to Kashmir: the same rapacious look in his eyes, the same ambiguous expression in his mouth.

I went to bed quite perplexed. The room was nice and large. A red carpet covered the whole floor. I locked the door behind me, but the foliage of the trees outside and the reflection of the water created moving shadows in the room which kept me awake. Furthermore, I could hear the noise of rats rummaging inside my open bag.

Fortunately I would leave the next morning. Nevertheless my passion for water, colours, vegetation, and

especially the muffled silence of those places, had bewitched me. I left Srinagar with a great wish to come back there when the lilies were in flower.

I went back to Delhi and the day after, I left for Madras.

In Nagpur, I was to meet Chari. The plane landed on time but, as it was still running along the strip a bird bumped into one of the engines, so the departure was delayed for two hours. Chari had arrived at the airport with two abhyasis who remained with us until the time of departure. In Madras, Krishna was waiting for us at the airport. It was the Diwali day, a festivity like our Christmas. All houses were decorated with long strips of lights. People exchanged presents; relatives gathered together, and Chari's family was invited, along with myself, to Sulochana's mother's residence. I remember that it was a long wonderful dinner, with the most delicious South Indian food.

The next day, Rajaji, Chari's father, took me to see the wonderful beach of Madras – a marvellous strip of sand on the Indian Ocean.

A few years back, Rajaji came to Latina and spent a few days at home with us. He met the abhyasis and gave sittings. He spoke to me of India, and of his life, and I listened to him as to a fairy-tale of a far away world. Rajaji was a very cultured and sensitive man and I was affectionate to him.

Before I left for Bangalore, Chari and Sulochana took me to Mahabalipuram to see those superb rock temples that rise from the sand on the seashore. On the way, we stopped to see a small nursery of crocodiles.

The next day I left for Bangalore. There I found an abhyasi waiting for me at the airport. Chari had informed them of my arrival, requesting them to look after me.

In Bangalore I met many brothers and sisters. In the small and clean ashram of Bangalore, sittings were given every day. Still today, I remember with joy those days spent with many brothers and sisters with whom I shared the great love for Babuji.

When I came back to Rome it was nearly Christmas. It was a trip which seemed more like a tourist trip. But was it so? Or was it just a sort of cleaning that was preparing me for something else? In Sahaj Marg, the cleaning is necessary to get us free from samskaras which we ourselves have created, and this was Master's work, but we have to undergo some part of it. "Instead of a stab, you will have a prick," Babuji used to tell us, metaphorically.

Though I had been in India for quite some time, I had been with Babuji only a few days, and it was a deep cleaning that Babuji had done on me.

The rest had served me to know Indian brothers and sisters, and to know the South of India, where Babuji many years back used to go to plant the seed of spirituality. In those same years when I, in this part of the world, picked up a "seed" from the ground. Who knows if it was one of those same seeds to fly up to here. Didn't Babuji say in his autobiography that he had worked also for Lord Christ during the war?

It had served me to know the kindness and hospitality of Chari's family, and to know that wonderful land where life was still going on in a simple and primitive way amid the muffled silence of water and floating gardens.

Srinagar 1977

Srinagar 1978 (oil on canvas)

INDIA – 1978

Either because I had been bewitched by that land or because I had to undergo a certain bhog, that year I went to India in May, though I knew it was the warmest month of the year, and I could hardly bear high temperatures.

In Delhi the heat was terrible. As soon as I was out of the plane, I felt I had jumped into a furnace, such was the impact with the hot air that hit my lungs.

Without a second thought I went straight to the National flights and in a minute I was on the waiting list for Kashmir. I thought I would stay there a few days and then go to Shahjahanpur. Soon they called me, and there I was, whimsically on a plane to Srinagar!

Among the passengers I had noticed a Western lady who was making a lot of fuss, speaking aloud with two children that were with her. One of the children had Western features while the other looked Oriental. At the airport in Srinagar I found that we were both going to the same place. Her name was Rani, she was German, lived in Bombay, and was working at the German Embassy. She had married an Indian man, from whom she had two children, and had later divorced him. Now she had come to Srinagar on vacation with her two children. She was a nice-looking

lady, tall, with an athletic figure and a stentorian and authoritative voice.

In the houseboat there were other guests and, as I had not made any reservation, the owner told me that for bedding he would accommodate me in another houseboat of his nearby.

Srinagar had the same muffled and dreamy atmosphere. I took a shikara and asked the boy to take me around the canals. I was anxious to fix those images on films. Now it was full summer season. On the lake, vendors, comfortably sitting in their shikaras, sold all kind of goods: shawls, bangles, necklaces, and handcrafted souvenirs. As the shikara glided past wonderful patches of nymphaeas rising over their large round leaves, I kept on making films, fascinated by those places.

Houses and huts arose among reeds and trees, right at the edge of the water. Now and then I could catch colourful images of the Kashmiri simple way of living. At the edge of the water next to her house, a woman in her coloured robe washed pots and pans. A young mother stood watching, holding a baby in her arms. Children splashed in the water. Ducks and ducklings glided among the reeds. A woman washed clothing in the lake water, beating the clothing on a stone. Sitting in his shikara, a man embroidered shawls to be sold to the tourists. It was a wonderful land of dreams, where time did not count.

In the evening we had dinner all together and a little later I was accompanied to the houseboat, which should have been nearby, but it seemed not to be so.

The shikara boy left me on the steps of a houseboat and swiftly disappeared on the dark spot of the water.

The houseboat looked to be in a very disastrous condition. From the steps I called out, but nobody replied. I was disconcerted. Slowly, I walked inside. Nobody seemed to be there.

In the dim light I realised that there was no one in the houseboat and I was completely alone on that wreckage. In astonishment, I stood there looking at the twinkling lights on the other side of the lake. It wasn't exactly fear that I was feeling, it was a mixture of anguish and astonishment for the strange situation I was finding myself in. Plucking up my courage, I started to look around. The planks of the floor were creaking under my feet. A frightened rat ran away noisily. In the semi-obscurity, I discovered at the bottom of the houseboat a small room. A bed was stuck on the side under the low roof. My marvellous dream had turned into a nightmare.

From a distance I could hear voices coming from an old houseboat. "Nearby live my wife's parents," the owner had told me before I left. "If you need anything you can call them." I was wondering how I could call anyone. Who would hear me?

It was a long nightmare. With my heart in a turmoil, I was praying to Babuji not to abandon me. I stood awake and wary all night, wondering how I ended up in this place, five thousand miles away from home, away from my Master, and even away from myself. I felt like a twig carried by the current.

Finally, I saw the first light filtering through the planks of the roof. Soon also the birds woke up and started chirping furiously, fighting with one another as a shower of plumes and wisps of straw fell on me

through the planks. The birds were so many that they had to fight for their space.

Patiently I waited for someone to come and rescue me. I was mad at the owner who, rather than losing a client, thought it better to give me a different accommodation. I had a nice room on a smaller houseboat next to the "Queen", connected with it by a gangplank so that I could come and go at my pleasure.

The following days I tried to have back the money and travelers checks that I deposited with him but he said that he would return them to me when I left.

Unfortunately, the date of my departure seemed to be uncertain. I was told that there were no seats on the plane. I should have booked it in Delhi, before leaving for Kashmir. In fact, if not booked beforehand it is very difficult to get a seat to go back. This is something I learned at my own expense. The situation had slipped from my hands I was helplessly at the mercy of events which I could not control. In my distress I was praying to Babuji to make me leave with Rani, who seemed to be the only person in this enchanted place, with her authoritative and firm manners, who gave me a sense of reality.

The days passed on and I was more and more worried. I was afraid I would not have enough time to go and see Babuji. The possibility of leaving was always uncertain. Besides, every time I had asked the owner to give me back my money he had always said that I could have it back after I paid the bill, at the moment of my departure. In his attitude there was something which I did not like. Though I was fascinated by this country, I did not trust the people. They were very clever to cheat

the people. I spoke to Rani about it and in the evening she shouted at him to give me back my money.

Ten days had already elapsed. The following week, Rani and the children would leave, and I still did not know anything about the date of my departure.

I had come to India to see my Master. I only meant to spend a few days in Kashmir but I had fallen in a trap. Every day that passed was a day less that I could spend with Babuji.

During the day we went touring around with Rani and the children, though I didn't care much now, but in the evening after dinner, when sitting on the veranda, looking at the dark spot of the water all around, I relived the anguish of my uncertainty.

In my soliloquy with Babuji, I was asking him why I had ended up in Kashmir. What was I to do with this land and with these people with whom I had nothing in common except, perhaps, my love for their country? My anguish increased as I realised in dismay my helplessness in the face of events of which I had no control, which didn't even seem to belong to my present life. In fact, I had the feeling as if living a fragment of another life, as if a sudden parenthesis had opened and I had found myself in the middle of another world in different times, in a different culture. A sort of *Brigadoon,* that old picture in which the leading character, while roaming about a land far away from his own, had suddenly found himself in a village where people wore ancient clothes and life was going on as in hundreds of years back.

This place no doubt fascinated me, but why had I seen that face, and what did it have to do with my present situation? Was it a precognition? Was it

connected with something I had already lived or that I had to live still? Did it belong to a remote past? Or to a present to which I had necessarily to undergo. All these questions have always remained without a reply.

I had always handled my life with rationality, self control, and confidence and now I was feeling uncertain and helpless. I felt like a drop of oil on blotting paper. The strangest thing for me was that I had chosen that person at the airport, among many others, because it seemed to me that he had a more reliable aspect. His resemblance with that face became evident only under a particular light and in a particular posture.

Time was going on and my situation was always the same, though now that I had had my money back, I felt free from any possible influence he could have exercised on me. Now it was this land itself that kept me imprisoned.

In the houseboat everybody knew that I had come to India to go and see my Master; even Rani wanted to know about meditation, but she sincerely declared that she was not interested in it.

One day the owner told me that he was going to see his guru and asked me if I wanted to go, too, but he recommended that I have a bath first. Out of curiosity I went. In a taxi, he, his wife, a child, and myself arrived at a typical house among rice fields, under the shade of tall, thin trees. The owner had brought a basket of fruits for his guru.

We entered a large room where, on the floor, covered with many layers of white linen, a man was sitting. He had a white beard and on his head he wore a small round cap. After having offered him the fruits, the owner introduced me, telling him that I had come to

India to see my guru. He asked me who my guru was and where he lived. I told him that my guru lived in a village south-east of Delhi and his name was Ram Chandra. Then I showed him a photo of Babuji that I always carried with me. He looked at it for some time, then slowly said, "He is a holy man."

Finally, at the agency I was told that there was a seat on the plane for me. Thank God, my imprisonment had come to an end. Eighteen days had gone and I only had a few days left to go and see Babuji.

I left together with Rani and the children. She lived in Bombay since ten years, and could also speak their language. From her I learned a few expressions in Hindi, which sometimes proved useful to stop someone too insistent.

In Delhi we said goodbye. She was to board the plane for Bombay. When she was at the other side of the airport, she turned around and shouted at the top of her voice, "Toni, tell your Master that I have taken good care of you." These words still today resound into my ears. In fact, unknowingly, she had been my guardian angel or a sort of bodyguard, and Babuji couldn't have chosen a better one. My Master had never stopped to look after me. I haven't seen Rani since and the children today must be two young men.

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From the airport I took a taxi and went to the Janpath Hotel. Luckily the temperature had gone reasonably down and I had a nice air-conditioned room. I called some abhyasis and soon many came for meditation. I asked them if there was anyone going to Shahja-

hanpur; after the Kashmir experience I didn't want to face another traumatizing trip by myself.

During the hot season in India, insects and cockroaches are found everywhere: at the station, on the trains, in latrines; at the airport the floor was literally covered with them.

I was told that there was a young couple from Madras that was going to see Babuji and I could go with them. But they had booked their bunks long before mine. In fact, my bunk, which was booked at the last moment, was along the corridor and in a different coach. I felt somewhat nervous at having to sleep on the passage-way. After accompanying me to my bunk, Ramadas and his wife Raji went to look for theirs. We would meet at the station in Shahjahanpur.

In the coach, the light hat not been lit yet, and I was watching suspiciously two fellows that came right after me, while watching a huge cockroach with a brown shining cover which seemed to be crawling towards me. I wanted to pull up my feet but I didn't; at this point I had reached a state in which disgust and fear had changed into a sort of resignation. I was watching, thinking, but remained inert.

The train would arrive in Shahjahanpur around 4:30 A.M. At that time it would still be dark and I was afraid I would not be awake, or perhaps I would not be able to see the name of the station, or to know when I had to get down. I felt I was going to have another night of tension. I wished so much I could travel with them and just follow them without having to worry. But somehow, at the bottom of my heart I knew that Babuji would have done something and in a way I felt somewhat amused to see what Babuji would do.

Now I knew that his thought could change circumstances, and also this time, Babuji's intervention was evident. Ramadas and Raji had gone for about twenty minutes, when suddenly I saw them in front of me. "What happened?", I asked Ramadas, trying to hide my happiness. Ramadas was looking at me with a stupefied expression, as if he could not believe what had happened, then slowly said, "Something strange has happened." One of our bunks has been given to two different names. We both have a regular booking for the same bunk. I was really amused, but I felt a little guilty. I thought, "Poor Raji, she is awaiting a child and has to travel so uncomfortably all night." I moved aside and made room for her to sit on my bunk. But Babuji would provide also for this. I do not know how it happened, but the three of us ended up in a compartment, each one sleeping comfortably in his own bunk.

When I arrived at Babuji's feet I was exhausted. I felt as if I had "crossed the sea on foot." Babuji looked up at me and said, with a grave voice, "I have been thinking of you sometimes." That was the only time that he welcomed me this way. He had always said, smiling, "I am happy to see you."

Inside of me, I heard Rani's voice shouting from the other side of the airport, "Toni, tell your Master that I have taken good care of you."

Babuji had always looked after me. It must have been a heavy bhog which had taken me to Kashmir but he had cleaned away almost all of it and no harm was done to me. I had only experienced fear, anguish, distress, and a terrible helplessness. Thanks to Babuji, that was my only share of the burden.

Ramadas and Raji left a few days later. I remained for the rest of the time at my disposal, and was blessed by Babuji's transmission.

That year I had undergone strange experiences, but it was worthwhile because they made me more deeply attached to Babuji.

In the ashram there were only a few Indian abhyasis. In the Meditation Hall there was a deep spiritual atmosphere. Babuji had started to charge it since it was under construction.

One day, while sitting in silence under the porch with Babuji, suddenly he said, "I had given you more and now I have given you some more." As I was looking at him without saying anything, he added, "Remember? When I was in Italy I had given you more and now I have given you some more." I stood there looking at him, incapable of saying anything.

The day I left, I went to see Babuji in his house. As usual, he was sitting under the porch. He seemed to be far away but I was feeling him inside my heart. I sat down in the chair in front of him. After a while Babuji got up and accompanied me to the gate. He spoke at length in Hindi with the man that was to accompany me to the station, then we climbed on the rickshaw and the boy started for the station. On the way the man told me that Babuji had requested him to leave me only after having put me on the train and having found a seat for me in a compartment with nice people.

I was going to Lucknow to see sister Kasturi. Babuji told me that Kasturi had been advised of my coming.

In the compartment there were only four persons. As usual, people like to ask you all sorts of questions: "What is your name, where are you coming from," etc. I was listening as if from another planet. I felt far away and detached. Since I had left Babuji, and during the three hours on the train for Lucknow, I felt as if each neuron of my brain was connected with the cosmic through subtle vibrating threads, through which a divine current was showering down, filling my heart and soul, but at the same time all my senses were powerfully awake and present. I felt all this also at a physical level. I was not disturbed, nor was I scared. I don't think I can fully express what my condition was in that unforgettable experience.

In Lucknow, I went to see sister Kasturi. She gave me a sitting. At the end she told me, "It seems that Master has put you to travel in the cosmic."

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My return trip was awful. I was flying with Aeroflot. For Eastern flights the Russians reserved the oldest and most uncomfortable aircraft. Additional rows of seats had been squeezed in, in a way that there was hardly any space left for one's legs.

I had left the hotel at 1:40 in the morning and I was very sleepy and tired. On the plane, the seat near me was occupied by a youngster who had slowly slid down on me, and every time I tried to push him back on his seat, he gave out kicks and thrusts with his elbow. His companion once in a while gave me pleading smiles, begging pardon.

Thank God, we finally arrived in Moscow. It was nine in the morning. In the transit room I found out that my plane for Rome would leave only at eleven in the evening. I dropped onto a bench and immediately fell asleep. After I don't know how long, I was suddenly awakened by noisy voices and a dull sound of shuffling feet on the floor. The room had filled with travellers in transit who were now crowding the bar. After a short while they all disappeared. I was alone again in that large cold room, which reminded me of a butcher's shop because of the white tails all around the walls.

In a corner three hostesses were cheerfully chatting. I was hungry. On the plane they had not given us anything to eat. I went to the bar. Very rudely, I was told to leave my handbag on the floor outside. The Russians were quite rude and impolite, due to the Cold War.

After having exchanged in roubles the few dollars I had left, I had a tea and something to eat. In reality there wasn't much to eat. I went back to my bench. I was still the only passenger in the huge white room. I fell asleep again. Once in a while I opened my eyes to see if there were other passengers for Rome, but there were none. Time went on. Waves of passengers arrived at regular intervals, noisily crowding the toilets and the bar, and hurriedly disappeared, swollen into the belly of their aircraft.

It was a long interminable day in which I passed from a cataleptic sleep to a sudden awakening. At every changing of the hostesses they searched me and checked my documents. In vain, I tried to have some more information on my flight. No one spoke English and I was always rudely dismissed. Foreigners were

not welcomed in their country. Nevertheless, once I went to the bar, and while eating something, sitting at one of those small round tables, three young men arrived. Two of them very rudely occupied my table as if I were not there, while the third one kindly smiled at me, seeming to be sorry for the other's behaviour and offered me some chocolate.

The hours were passing and the moment of my departure was approaching, but I was still alone in the huge transit room. Finally, at about 11 P.M., after having been searched once more, they accompanied me to a completely empty plane, which immediately left. No lights, no hostesses on board. I was the only passenger in the plane. I laid down on three seats and fell asleep.

Suddenly, I was awakened by a strong pain in my ears. The plane had landed at the Fiumicino's Airport. No one was there to say "Fasten your seatbelt, please." I nearly rolled down from the seats.

Outside it was still dark. Three hours had passed since I had left Moscow. Finally I was in Rome.

But my nightmares had not finished yet. They followed me almost to the door of my own house. I was still living in Latina and I thought it would be more convenient to get the bus to the station, from where I could catch a train. After having collected my luggage, I climbed on the bus for Air Terminal, but the man told me that the tickets were sold in the lounge inside the airport. I left my luggage on the bus and ran inside to buy the ticket. When I came back the bus had gone. Immediately I jumped into a taxi, which luckily was at hand, and told the taxi man to please run after the bus, that in the meantime was going to the National Flights. Finally I overtook the bus, and by about three in the

morning I was at the Air Terminal. It was still dark and there were no trains yet. I wanted to wait inside the Air Terminal until daylight but was told that they had to close down, and therefore I could not stay there.

The sidewalk outside the station was full of hobos sleeping on the ground. No policemen were around. Once again I found myself at the mercy of events. I went back inside the station. At that time of the night not even porters were around. Finally I saw one and, dragging my luggage, I went towards him and asked him to take my luggage and accompany me to the luggage deposit. But he made a lot of difficulties, saying that his shift was over, and started to bargain. It seemed to me like still being in India!

Finally, I could deposit my luggage and went to the waiting room. I would wait there until morning. As soon as I opened the door a disgusting smell hit me. The benches were all occupied by sleeping hobos. My first instinct was to go out again, but considering the situation, I thought it better to remain there. I sat at the edge of a bench where a woman hobo was sleeping, rolled up into a blanket. She opened two sleepy eyes on me and, with a shade of a smile, moved a little away to make room for me to sit down.

I remained there, patiently awaiting daylight, staring at those poor people. Images that here, in the old, well-fed Europe, were, after all, not much different from those I saw in India. I wondered what made them choose such a kind of life. Any work, even the most humble, would have allowed them to keep their dignity. I felt that there was something more than poverty behind their mute refusal to society. I am sure that it isn't their choice to live that way. What might seem a choice is only due to the great inexorable karmic law.

INDIA – 1979

In March I sent a letter to Babuji through Irene, in which I asked his permission to visit him towards the end of October.

In Latina, the number of abhyasis was increasing and during the weekly satsangh, I shared the work with Rina and Anna Maria. Each time, we formed three groups, so that the abhyasis could have the most possible benefit. But very soon I should have to go back to Rome. I had retired from work and there was no reason for me to prolong my stay in Latina.

Still, I remained there almost all of 1979. With the abhyasis from Naples we were constantly in touch. We had a gathering there, organized by Irene Pignatelli, and a few months later, I organized another gathering in Latina, in the hall of a hotel on the beach. We were quite many and everyone seemed to be interested in it.

That year I had also the occasion of speaking about Sahaj Marg meditation in a morning program of Latina Broadcast, after which someone came for meditation. In the meantime, my flat in Rome had been evacuated and the time came for me to go back to Rome.

After my departure from Latina the group slowly became smaller. The Rizzo sisters lived out in the country and people found it difficult to go there.

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At the beginning of November, Anna Maria and myself left for India. This time I was not alone, and before going to Shahjahanpur, we went to the Maldives via Sri Lanka, where we stopped for a few days. But my heart was in Shahjahanpur and I couldn't wait to get there.

At the ashram I met again dear brothers and sisters, Indians and Westerners both. Babuji was happy to see me but his health was not very good. He was feeling very weak. So, after the morning meditation we all went to Babuji's house. Lined up on the road outside the ashram gate, we waited for the bus that would take us to the village, or we would get a rickshaw.

One morning Clara S. arrived from Rome and I remained behind with her. When I reached Babuji's house, they told me that Babuji had been repeatedly asking for me, and didn't want to start meditation before my coming. I explained to Babuji the reason of my delay. Afterwards he gave us all a wonderful transmission.

One day we were all sitting in silence around him, some under the porch, some on the cots outside. I was sitting on a chair in front of him, looking at his thin figure, with a heart full of love.

There were abhyasis from France, Canada, America, India, and us two from Italy. Babuji was smoking his hookah, his eyes lost, far away. Suddenly, as if following an inner thought, he said aloud, "Toni loves me and I love her as such." After that he got up from his chair and walked into Lalaji's room. It was as if he had pronounced aloud a thought that had crossed his mind. I was emotional, but at the same time I was wondering why he, always so impartial and so far away

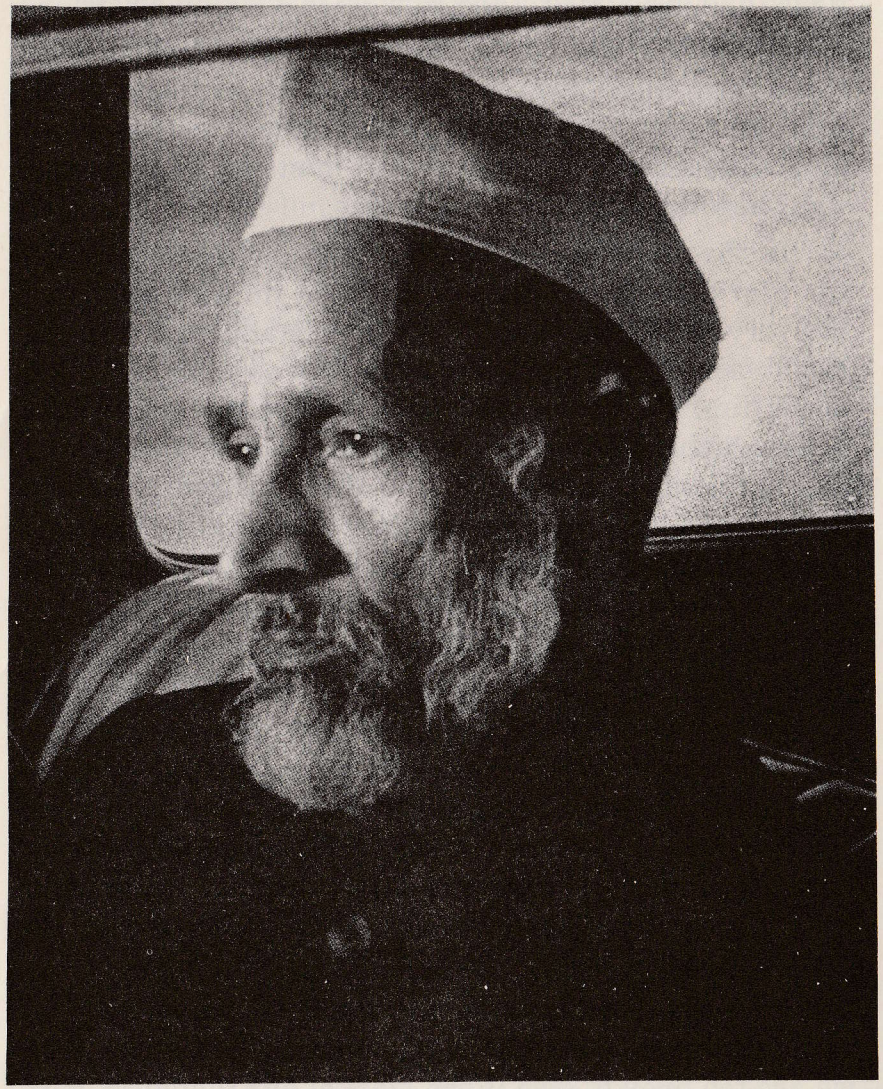
that, at times, he didn't even seem to see us, had pronounced these specific words. I remember that Clara, who was sitting just near the door of Lalaji's room, had exclaimed, "*Alè*! Now he is walking away!"

He did not see the persons. He only felt what was emanating from them, and perhaps he had said aloud what was only a thought. I do not know. This is only an idea. But Babuji's words always had a meaning that went beyond the words themselves.

In this moment, as I am writing, I have understood the real meaning of his words. What he wanted to say to everyone there, what he really meant, was that he loved each one of us in the same way as each one of us loved him. Those words did not refer to me personally. It wasn't that he loved more one or the other. In fact, he had not said, "I love Toni," but, "Toni loves me," which is different. It was only my love and my devotion for him that attracted "as such" his love. Babuji was like a mirror. He only reflected what was in front of him.

Love is the greatest cosmic force, and I am not speaking about love between a man and a woman, where physical attraction plays the main role. Love is the only single force – it doesn't belong to the world of duality. In front of it all barriers, all prejudices and preconceptions fall down. It doesn't need anything to be born. It simply is. Someone has called it "the cosmic glue." Love is that force that keeps everything in harmony with every other thing in this fluctuating, expanding Universe.

This is a truth which is always under our eyes, but we are too busy to give it the least of our thoughts. It is a pity that man, always so pressed by his everyday problems, doesn't ever find a minute to think over this great mystery, which is the basic force of all creation.



BABUJI IN MUNICH – 1980

In 1980, I did not go to India because Babuji came to Europe. As usual, he was accompanied by Chariji, his spiritual son, who tenderly took care of him with love and devotion.

In May, I went to see Babuji in Munich. I had just left the clinic where I had undergone a quite serious operation. Babuji told me to do the cleaning on the place where the operation had been made: "Not much," he said, "About ten minutes."

He himself was not well and in Munich submitted to a series of analyses and check-ups. Nevertheless, he used to give us sittings and appear happy and cheerful.

That was the time when, in a moment when I could be near Babuji, I had asked him why his correspondence with me had stopped in 1974, and he had replied, "Because since then you have started running."

In Rome it seemed that there wasn't much interest in a spiritual search. I remember that when I had mentioned this to Babuji, he had replied with a grave voice, "What I had to do I have done; now it is up to you." But it wasn't easy. Babuji did not wish to have publicity. "It must be known through mouth to mouth," he used to say.

Nevertheless, a small group of abhyasis had started to form. Fausto, in the meantime, had moved to Rome and had found a flat just near my house.

For Basant Panchami we met in my house with the abhyasis from Naples and from Latina. We were not many, but there was a deep and sincere brotherly love among us and remembrance of Babuji was constantly present in each one of us.

PAINTING OF BABUJI

For three years I had kept at the back of my mind a deep wish to fix on a canvas an image that I had seen during a meditation: a whitish vortex from which a face had emerged. I could only see a broad forehead and a short white beard before it quickly disappeared to my eyes.

Both Babuji and Lalaji had a broad forehead and a short white beard but the vision was so quick that I could not see whether it was Babuji or Lalaji. Furthermore, how could a colourless image which should, moreover, express spirituality, be fixed on a canvas? So the time went by and the wish remained in my heart, but very often I found myself thinking about it.

Finally one day, as if under an impulse, I took a brush, two colour tubes: blue and white, and a canvas. Unfortunately, I didn't have a new one in the house, so I took one which already had some smears of colour in one corner, went down to the garden, and very determinedly, I dipped the brush in the white paste with only a shade of blue in it, and drew a vortex on the right side of the canvas, as I had seen it. Then I drew the two white signs at both sides of the forehead. I did not really know whom I was going to paint, I only knew that it was a broad forehead. With the third touch I joined these two signs and then I realised that it was Babuji's head, with that characteristic bump at the top

which so many times I had been looking at, wondering what were the thoughts underneath. It was Babuji. It was my Master. Quickly, with small touches, as if my hand was guided, I drew the beard, the ears, the eyes. Every touch revealed a further trait of his beloved face. In fifteen minutes it was there in front of me. The fresh paint gave his eyes a vivid penetrating look that went right into my soul.

I ran upstairs, put the canvass on the easel, and stood there, lost in the immensity of what I was feeling. I remember that my sister Anna arrived in that moment. She stood in the doorway open-mouthed, incapable of saying anything, in front of those eyes that seemed to transmit from the Infinite.

I never have painted portraits, and this came out unknowingly, and only by Babuji's grace. (See back cover.) I had a photo made of it by a photographic lab, and when I went to see Babuji in November, I showed it to him. He looked at it attentively, holding it with both hands. I was watching him trying to read the expression on his face. He seemed to be amused and pleased at the same time. Then he became serious and, putting his hand on the vortex, said, "Purity is here," and touching the face, he added, "Spirituality is there." I had the feeling that the two things should not have been separate.

INDIA – 1981

The first of October I wrote to Babuji the following letter, asking him permission to go and see him, together with Anna Maria Rizzo. In it, I told him of a beautiful experience I had, and also of my craving to see him:

Rome, 1 October, 1981

My dear Master,

May you live long and healthy. With this letter I am asking you permission to come and see you towards the end of this month. Though you are with me every minute of my life, I feel very happy that I can see you very soon. I have become so close to Shahjahanpur in my thoughts that I feel I am there, so clear is in my heart the vision and the atmosphere of the place which has become everything to me. My beloved Master, you are a Nature's gift to humanity, you have given me so much that there are moments in which the craving becomes almost unbearable and restlessness prevails all through.

I wish to tell you about an experience I had a few months ago, on exactly the day of Sundara's unexpected arrival. It was about ten in the morning. It was one of those dark and rainy days that it seems that night time is approaching.

I was sitting on my bed, working on the translation of *Towards Infinity*. Suddenly a light coming from the adjacent room caught my attention. I was so absorbed in the depth of the work I was doing that for a moment I looked blankly at it. From the white reflection projected on the ceiling and on the wall which I could see through the open door, it must have been a kind of big oval light oscillating in the middle of the room. The moment I realised that that light could not come from anywhere from the outside, for a second I could not move, then I jumped from the bed to see what it was, but it had gone, nothing was there. I was perplexed, I lit the light to check whether it could have been that, but the light of the bulb looked very feeble in the false light of the day. I looked outside to see whether it could have come from a window of the building in front but all windows were shut and gloomy. I tried to convince myself that it had come from the outside, but the more I thought of it the more I could not understand the origin of that light.

A light like that could only be reflected by a large mirror pointed at the sun. But there was no sun; on the contrary it was almost dark. Since then I often look at the same place through the open door, hoping to see that light again, but so far nothing has happened, except that I seem to live in a state where expansion of soul and mind is such that this world, though marvellous as it is, seems but a grain of sand.

That same afternoon Prabha, Sundara's wife, called me from the airport. They were going to Spain for work but due to some Alitalia strike they had to remain in Rome for a few days. The same

thing happened on their way back, so the Italian abhyasis had the privilege of having sittings from them.

Anna Maria Rizzo, preceptor in Latina, will come to Shahjahanpur with me.

I am looking forward to seeing you soon and in excellent health; in the meantime I remain at your holy feet.

Affectionately,
Toni Bernardi

On the 17th of October, Babuji's reply came, signed by the Secretary, Shri J.R.K. Raizada:

Dear Toni,

Received your letter dated 1.10.81. Rev. Master has been pleased to welcome you to visit our Ashram towards the end of this month.

Kindly reach our Ashram direct at Hardoi Road, Shahjahanpur and bring this letter with you.

With blessings from Rev. Master.

Your affectionately
J.R.K. Raizada

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It was the beginning of November, 1981. I was going to Shahjahanpur for the fifth time, but this time things seemed to be more difficult than ever. We disembarked in Bombay, Anna Maria and myself, and from there it took us five days to get to Shahjahanpur.

This happened because, to save time, we bought in Italy the air tickets for Bombay-Delhi-Lucknow, not thinking that confirmation had to be made in India. In Bombay, all the planes to Delhi were full, and we lost three days before we could get two seats to Delhi. The same thing happened again in Delhi, so finally we decided to go by train. I loved that route anyhow. The dear old Shahjahanpur, shocking and sublime at the same time, was shining like a jewel to my heart. I loved every single stone of that place. I remember how, the year before, while in Bali and in the Maldives, my heart was crying for Shahjahanpur and longing for the time I would be there.

When we arrived at the ashram the place was full of abhyasis, both Indian and Westerners. There was a group of people who was about to leave without having been able to see Master at all. Every day, Master meant to come but when the time came and everybody was expecting him, a telephone call would advise that Master was not feeling well enough to come to the ashram. This we were told when we arrived at the ashram. I was feeling very sad, though the atmosphere in the ashram was so charged that Master's presence could be felt everywhere. I could have spent the rest of my life there, asking for nothing.

A few hours after our arrival, someone came to look for us, saying that Master wanted to see the "two from Italy." My heart melted. Immediately we managed to get a rickshaw and went to Master's house. The countryside was beautiful in the cool morning air. The houses, the river, the people, the buffaloes added their rich colour to the shining green of the cultures and trees. When we reached Master's place, he was sitting there, in his usual place under the porch. He smiled at

us, and before I could say anything he said, "I am no more fit to travel abroad." I wanted to embrace him and kiss him but I was just standing there with my hands joined in the Indian style, while tears were running down my cheeks. With a small voice I asked him whether he remembered me, "Yes," he said, with that sweet smile of his, "you are Toni from Italy." I was so happy that he remembered me that more tears were running down my face. He told us to sit down. I sat in that chair just in front of him and Anna Maria sat next to me. We were silent. We sat silently in the immense bliss which could only be experienced in his presence. We were the only people there except for an abhyasi of the place.

After a while Master got up, with the help of that abhyasi, and slowly walked to the other side of the compound, showing a great interest in the flowers behind the well. We followed him with our eyes, turning our necks as much as we could, so as not to lose sight of him. He kept on conversing in Hindi about the flowers, touching them here and there, and after a while he sat down there in the sun, apparently forgetting all about us. Anna Maria and myself glanced at each other, wondering when would he be coming back to his seat. Why had Babuji to go and look at the flowers just when we were there? He himself had asked us to come. As all this mumbling was going on inside of me, I felt a strange force which made my head turn back towards Master's empty chair. It was a kind of attraction, a subtle force to which, try as I would, I could not resist, though I wished to keep on looking at Babuji as he was sitting and talking at the other side of the compound.

Slowly but steadily my head was resuming its original position facing Master's empty chair, and there was nothing else I could do. In that moment I realised that that chair was not empty at all, because a tremendous transmitting power was emanating from it. I did not know whether Anna Maria was feeling the same but I myself was forced to close my eyes in a deep absorption. I do not know how long it lasted. These experiences cannot be measured by our values of time and space. When I opened my eyes, still under the influence of that wonderful transmission, Babuji was coming back. He sat down in his chair. After a while he said, "You'd better go now, it is time for your lunch." We took our rickshaw back to the ashram.

In the blissful condition I was in, I remembered Birthe's words years ago when she told me, "Sometimes Master, while transmitting gets up and walks away, leaving his astral body there to do the work."

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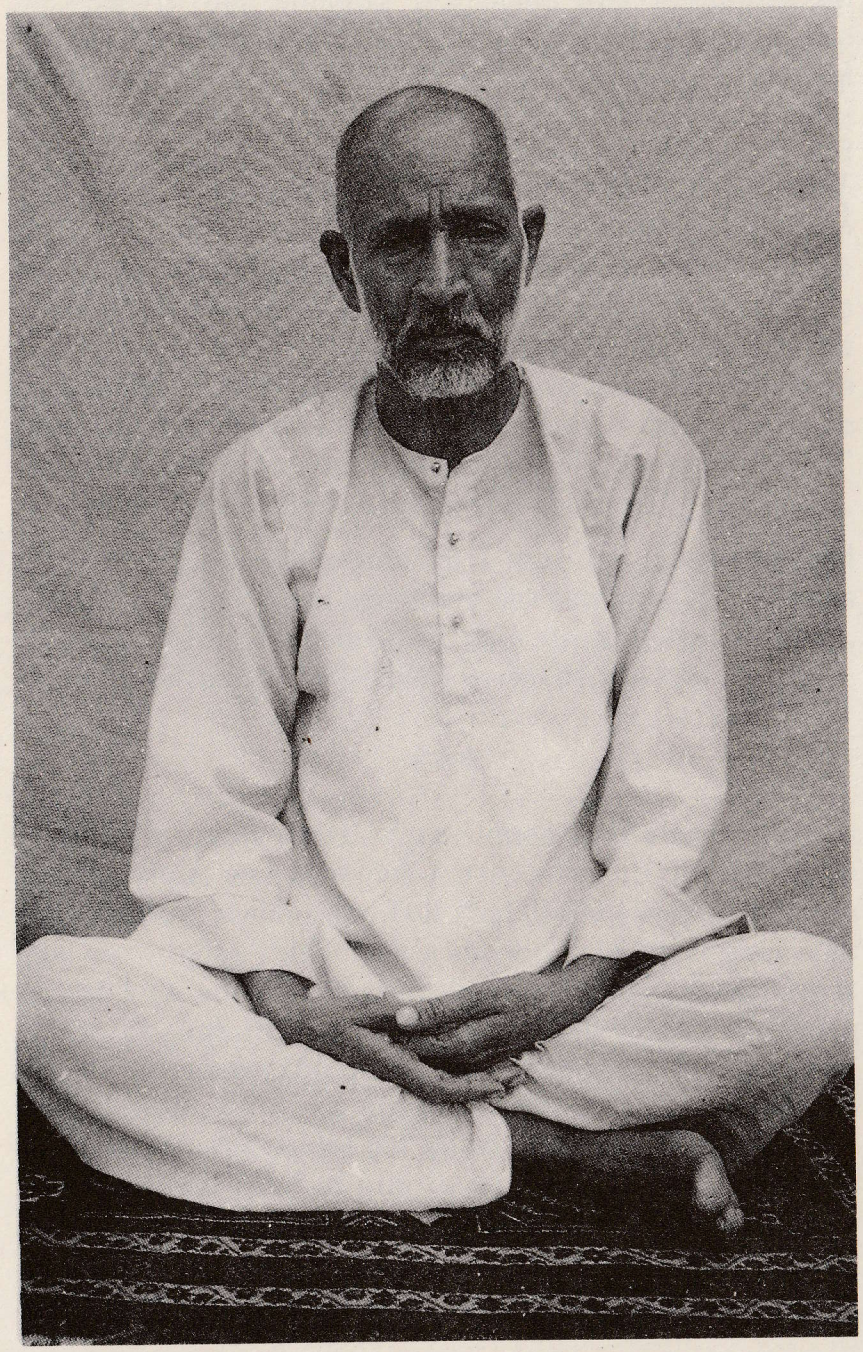
Today, that short letter signed by Raizada – worn out by time, and to which I had never attributed much importance besides the fact that Babuji was pleased to see me – today this letter is showing me, even more, the great love and the deep dedication of that little Great Man. Though ill and tired, he wanted to give me, with that experience, the incredible revealing gift of what he really was. He could not give us a sitting because his physical condition did not allow him to do so, but he left that "special side" of him to do the work while he was sitting in the sun on the other side of the compound.

Still today, from where he is, he continues to speak to me, because only today I have realised that that

transmission which seemed to come from an empty chair, was the transmission of the Special Personality that was in Him.

Many are the things that I have discovered while working on this book, which I dedicate to him with a heart full of love.



BASANT PANCHAMI WITH MASTER 1982

The celebration of Basant Panchami 1982 was going to be held on January 28-29-30 and that was, unfortunately, the last Basant that Babuji spent with us.

I had returned from India; a few months later the idea came to me that this year I should attend the Basant celebration in India. To tell the truth, I felt that it was going to be difficult with my husband. India, for us, is not around the corner and thinking to go back there after only two months seemed quite inconceivable. Cautiously, I spoke about this while there were some abhyasis in the house and, as I didn't notice any negative reaction from my husband, I started to seriously consider my sixth trip to Shahjahanpur.

I would see Babuji again, see Chari, Kasturi, and all the brothers and sisters that I had met during the previous years, and this filled my heart with happiness. It was December. Christmas festivities had already started, but for me this air of festivity would be unusually prolonged this year: very soon I would go to India.

After Christmas, I came back to Rome. At the first attempt, I found without any effort a fine flight combination with Air India: Rome-Delhi non-stop for L.700,000. It seemed incredible after the many exhausting journeys I had previously made.

On the evening of January 22, Umberto, Rina, and I were at the airport, waiting to board the plane that in eight hours would take us to Delhi. Fausto and some other abhyasis accompanied us to the airport. Umberto was still not fully conscious that he was going to India. Really speaking, none of us three had realised it.

Still, we were going, and for each one of us there was a specific reason. It is a fact that when one comes back from Basant, he or her carries within an increased richness. This was what I had always been told during the years of abhyas but I had never had this experience. The Basant falls more or less towards the end of January or the beginning of February. It is the celebration of Lalaji's birthday. "It is a day of great auspiciousness," Babuji used to say.

This festivity lasts three days and during these days all abhyasis that take part in it are blessed with an uninterrupted shower of Pranahuti which falls down incessantly, filling the place and the persons with a blessed atmosphere of love and peace. A deep brotherhood develops all around, levelling down all possible differences of visages and costumes, among people of different races and cultures, merging everybody in an immense ocean of love.

Lalaji Sahib used to say that consciousness exists not only in man, but also in animals, plants, minerals, and even in the atoms, and it isn't a more limited consciousness, but finer, more intense and divine, though apparently non-existent.

When I went to see Babuji for the first time, the ashram was still under construction and this celebration was held at Babuji's house. In fact, I had noticed huge pots and pans in a room where sacks of wheat,

rice, and cereals were stored. They were used for cooking in those days, during which there was a considerable number of abhyasis coming from all parts of India.

I always went to see Master in October or November, except for once when I went in May, but now the time had come for me to have that experience.

The departure was delayed first by one hour, then by another one, and while we were waiting at the gate I thought I saw among the passengers a face which was familiar to me. Immediately I called, "Paolo?" It was he, Paolo Passaquindici. One of the first preceptors whom, soon after, didn't show up anymore. I remember that the last time I called him, his mother told me, very annoyed, that her son was not well and could we please stop calling him.

Quite strange to take the same plane for India; while in Rome we had never met anymore. He told me that he was going to Pondicherry to have a month's rest. I spoke for a long time with him. I reminded him of the Master, of Chari, and Rajaji. His eyes brightened at those old reminiscences but I think he never understood what Sahaj Marg really is and what a great Master was Babuji. What a pity! Who knows if this apparently casual encounter was only one more chance that Babuji wanted to give him!

We boarded the plane; it was nearly two in the morning. Travelling towards the East it soon became daylight. When we arrived in Delhi it was already afternoon. We quickly went through passport checking and customs formalities and soon were outside. The coolies took our luggage to a taxi and, after having ascertained that the meter in the taxi was functioning,

we started towards Delhi, and directed the driver to the Janpath Hotel.

The taxi ran along the left side of the road, horning almost incessantly, as they all do here. On the way the driver told us that a three day holiday was going on, (in fact, it was Independence Day and it was also a Saturday) that the Centre was closed to traffic, and that all hotels were full. Fortunately, the Centre was not closed to traffic but the Janpath Hotel was full. Luckily we found a good accommodation at the nearby Imperial hotel.

We rested for some time, then went to the offices of the Railway Reservation to book our berths on the Lucknow Mail, which left every evening at 21:45, but they had only two berths, while we needed three. So we decided to wait until Monday, and to get confirmation on our return tickets, and to try at the Baroda Building, where they always had a number of berths reserved for tourists.

In fact, on the following Monday, after a one hour queue we got our berths, and in the evening we could leave for Shahjahanpur. Three of our ten days stay had already gone.

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When we arrived in Shahjahanpur the weather was bad. It was quite cold and it had been raining for some days, but at the ashram the plants were all in flower and when the sun came out it seemed like springtime.

All around the Meditation Hall, huge gaily-coloured tents had been put up. The building was not sufficient

to accommodate the two thousand people gathered for this special celebration. Each tent was occupied by 100 to 150 abhyasis. Some straw had been spread on the earth, already wet from the rain, and on it we slept, shivering, inside our sleeping bags. Nevertheless we were alright; nobody was sick.

The French abhyasis had found a small table, and on it they used to make their *tisanes*. Sometime during the day, Rina and I went to the kind of bar which someone from the village had the permit to put up at the entrance near the gate. There we could have a cup of tea, previously prepared in huge pails, abundantly watered down by the rain that dripped through the tent.

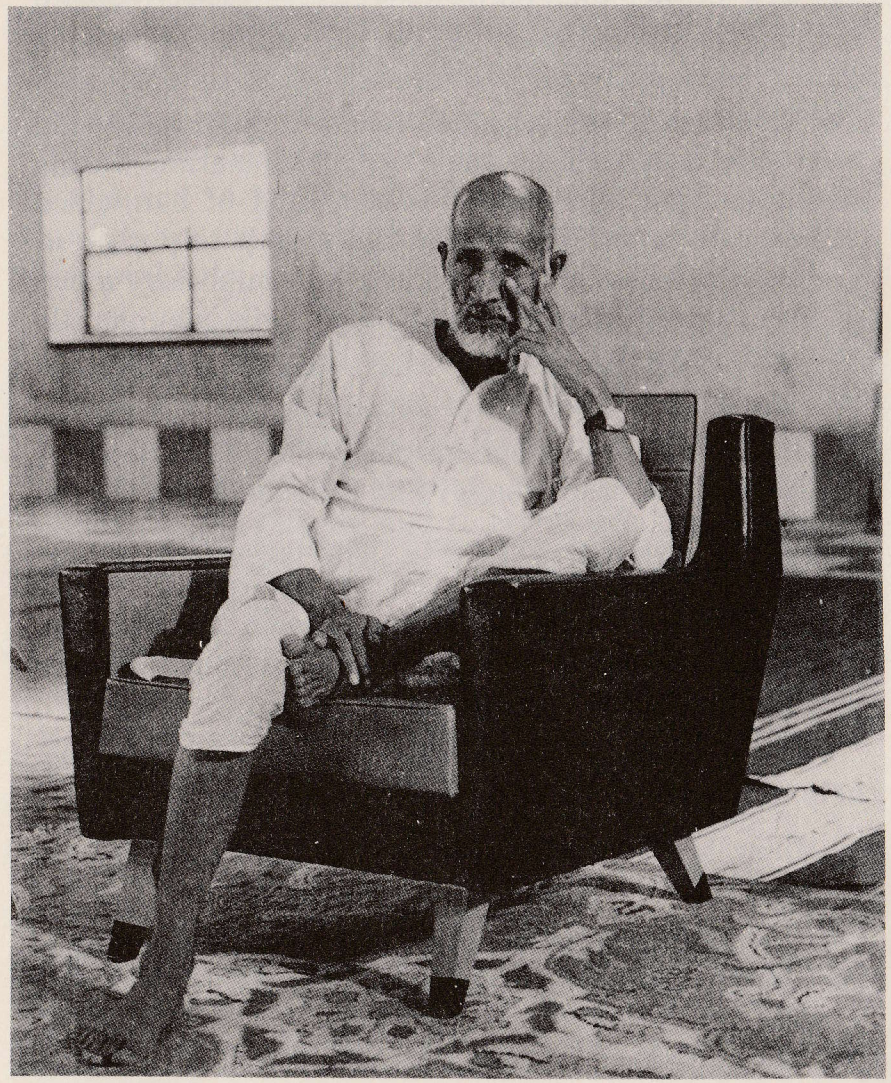
In spite of the rather uncomfortable conditions for the body, the soul was happy and fully appeased.

Babuji was very weak and remained in his cottage most of the time. He received the abhyasis in small groups. We sat on the floor in silence in front of him, and from his bed he looked down at us and his eyes were two immense lakes of love.

For the afternoon meditation he came out, with the help of two abhyasis, to conduct the satsangh.

Dear brothers and sisters that I met during my previous journeys to India, I met again on this occasion.

It was an unforgettable experience – that last and, for me, unique Basant Panchami.



BABUJI IN PARIS – SEPTEMBER, 1982

We left India leaving Babuji in an extremely weak condition. Still, they decided that he would come to Europe again. I remember how worried he looked when anybody asked him when he would come to Europe again.

Already, the previous year, when I went to see him in his house, the first thing he said was, "I am no more fit to travel abroad," and I reassured him that we did not want him to travel – we would come to see him. But they decided that Babuji had to come to Europe again.

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The seminar was held at the Ecole Central de Chantenay Malabry, from August 27 to September 6.

It was a real cruelty to force Babuji to endure one more exhausting journey. So ill and suffering was he. I can still see him while he was being literally carried to the meditation room. He didn't even try to put his legs down. I remember hearing someone behind me saying, rudely, "It is his work."

During the day he was laying down in his room and nobody was allowed to go in, except a few.

One day the Italian group was permitted to gather around him. For the occasion, he was brought out into

the lobby. I was sitting on the steps next to his chair and heard him whispering, while looking at us with eyes full of love, "I would like to give you a transmission but I am not able."

It was painful to see Babuji in such suffering condition and I could never understand why and for whose benefit Babuji, already very ill, had to bear such a striving stress.

At the moment of his departure all the abhyasis had gathered outside the building where he was staying. I was standing near the car in which he was to travel. Babuji was brought to the car and seated next to the driver. Andrè Poray, bent over him, was monotonously mumbling, "Thank you Master, thank you Master, thank you Master," repeating it like a litany, giving the impression to those who were standing far, that he was speaking. Babuji, very pale and suffering, a far-away look in his eyes, seemed not to see anyone. I wished I could touch him and tell him all my love but I could not, and stood there with tears in my eyes. Then the door was closed, Martine started the engine, and the car disappeared to our eyes. In a moment everyone dispersed, getting ready to leave.

I went to the room that Babuji had occupied; now nobody was there to stop me. I sat on the floor near his bed. The cushion still showed the print of his head. A bunch of flowers on the table still expanded its perfume, making more sad the atmosphere, full with a "presence" that wasn't there anymore. I cried for a while.

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The following months, the news from India was rather scarce.

From France a synthetic bulletin arrived:

> *"Le Metre était arrivé a Shahjahanpur le 6.9.82. un examen montrait une présence inquiétante de sucre e d'uréè dans le sang. Transportè immediatament a l'hopital de Lucknow en état de grande faiblesse, il fut nourri artificiellement."*

Another bulletin on September 16 said that Master had received a blood transfusion on account of a very severe rectal haemorrhage.

On September 27, Master had another haemorrhage and was transferred to the New Institute Médical de New Delhi. Blood supply to the brain was not sufficient; he was in a state of semi-consciousness. He had lucid intervals but could not speak.

As of September 29, Master's general condition did not show any improvement.

Beginning October 1, all visits to the ashram in Shahjahanpur were suspended.

After that, no more news came for a long time.

For the 1983 Basant Panchami, abhyasis were requested to celebrate it at their own Centres, as Babuji was very ill and his condition remained stationary.

That year the Basant Panchami Utsav fell during working days, so we decided to celebrate it the following weekend. On this basis, I started to prepare a program for the weekend, forgetting all about the real date. The morning of the nineteenth, my meditation

was exceptionally good, and throughout the whole day I experienced a divine energy coming down upon me, no matter where I was or what I was doing. Only late in the evening I realised that that was the real day of the celebration.

Though Babuji was laying in a hospital, five thousand miles away, I had the same experience that I had the previous year when I was in Shahjahanpur. It was one more proof of how this divine energy works in us, whether we are aware of it or not.

BABUJI'S ILLNESS AND DEATH – 1983

It was March, still winter, and rather cold. News from India was sporadic and scarce.

For some time I was living in a peculiar inner condition. Though physically well, this inner condition influenced my physical body in such a way that I thought I must have had a sort of illness. I was feeling as if all energy had been sucked away from my system. Especially at night, when I went to bed and pulled the blankets over me, I felt like sinking into the cold emptiness of death.

One afternoon I remember in particular: Mr. X came to see us. My husband remained home with him and I took the dog out for a walk. The dog pulled forward and backward, dragging me along like a leaf in the wind. I felt devoid of strength and will, as if I had lost all connection with my body. I felt dumb and dead.

In April, I was still feeling this way, and I was really worrying because, with the northern abhyasis, we arranged to meet in Turin for the celebration of Babuji's 84th birthday. I was to drive 400 kilometres and didn't know how I could do it in the condition I was in.

Then one morning I woke up and found that everything had gone. That peculiar inner feeling I had, vanished. I felt perfectly alright and my old self again. I

thanked God inside of me, because the next morning I had to leave for Turin.

The next day, the 20th of April, I left for Turin. I stopped in Florence to see some abhyasis. As soon as I entered the house they told me that Babuji passed away the previous morning.

I felt a pang in the heart and I understood what Babuji meant when years ago, while with him, I asked him if he suffered when he heard of his Master's death. 'Yes," he said, "I felt like this." And, getting up from his chair, he pressed twice his closed fist on my shoulder, adding, "and this has been there for more than twenty years."

Then I realised that whatever was that strange condition I had been living in for months, had stopped, or better, vanished, at the moment that Babuji left his physical body. What I thought a sort of illness, was his agony, that my soul had lived moment after moment.

I must have been looking for this beloved Master of mine for many past lives if my soul was so attached with him to make me live his agony in symbiosis with him.

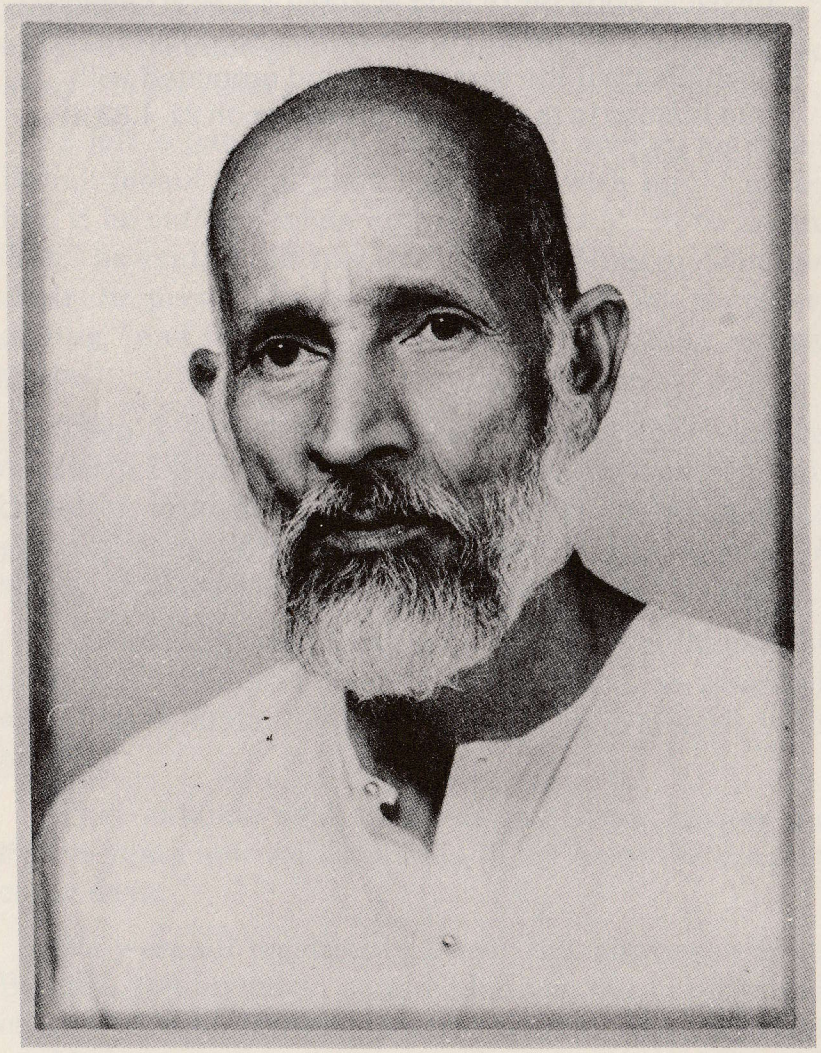
That sublime soul that was my living Master for twelve years now would remain in my heart for the rest of my days.

We were all together in Turin, but not to celebrate Babuji's 84th birthday, as was planned, but to be united in the sorrow for his departure from this physical world.

On the 28th of April the official news arrived of Babuji's death, signed by our brother Sri S.A. Sarnad:

Dear Brother/Sister,

With deep sorrow I have to inform you that our most revered and beloved Master left his physical body on 19.4.83 at about 9 A.M. at Clinic Helvetia, New Delhi. His body was brought to Shahjahanpur the same night and cremated with due honour in the Ashram premises on 21.4.83 at 11:25 A.M.



A TRIBUTE TO RAM CHANDRA FROM LATINA CITY

Though seven years had elapsed since Babuji had been to Latina, having known of his departure from this physical world, the city wanted to pay a tribute to Ram Chandra, the Reverend Sage, Master of Spiritual Yoga, whom years ago had come from the Far East to bring his message of love and the secret of human evolution through meditation.

From the cultural page of the weekly magazine Pontin Sportivo of 22 June, 1983:

A TRIBUTE TO RAM CHANDRA

"REALITY AT DAWN"

A book of the Yoga Master, recently passed away, whom in Latina held a conferenza attended by many. The problem of life in Indian philosophy is faced with great concern: the Yoga Meditation is the means for the unification of the individual soul with the Universal soul.

In 1976, at the "Consorzio per i servizi culturali" of Latina, at the presence of Shri Ram Chandra, the Indian Master of Sahaj Marg Yoga, a lecture was given by his disciple Shri P. Rajagopalachari.

The conference had been attended with much interest and since then many in Latina have started meditation which is meant for the purification of the spirit and having as ultimate the union with the Universal Soul.

We have come to know that Ram Chandra passed away on the 19th of April last. For all his life dedicated to the purification of the spirit, the Master deserves the tribute of our remembrance. Hereinafter we are giving an excerpt from his book *Reality at Dawn*:

> There are perhaps only a few among the masses who have ever given any serious consideration to the problem of life. Generally they take a very narrow view of it. The only problem before them is to secure a decent living, well provided with the desired comforts. In other words, to them the object of life is only to achieve the greatest possible comfort and prominence in the world. If they are able to achieve it, they think their life to be a success, otherwise not. They may, however, pass on as great men, philosophers, scientists or politicians and acquire world-wide fame and riches, but their problem of life still remains unsolved. It does not really end with death, for it is only a change of form.
>
> Our next life, whatever it may be, begins after death. Just as prior to our present life we have had numerous other lives in different forms, similarly even after our death we may have numerous other lives. The cycle of birth and death continues indefinitely. The problem before us is not to find out a solution of our present life but for all lives that we may henceforth have. In the wider sense, it covers the entire existence of soul in various forms, gross or subtle, at different

times till the time of Mahapralaya (Final-extinction).

There may be difference of opinion over the question of births and deaths, among the followers of different creeds, but it is certain that mere theoretical knowledge of the scriptures will not solve the question.

Practical experience in the spiritual field is necessary for the purpose. The question ends when one acquires *Anubhava Shakti* (intuitive Capacity) of the finest type and can himself realise the true state of life hereafter. The mystery is, however, explained by people in various ways, but almost all agree on the point that the object of life is to achieve eternal bliss after death. For this they insist on a life of virtue, sacrifice and devotion which will bring to them the eternal joy of the paradise or salvation or peace.

But that is not the end of the problem.

It goes on much beyond. Now in order to trace out the solution of the problem we must look back to the point wherefrom our existence has started. Our existence in the present grossest form is neither sudden nor accidental but it is the result of a slow process of evolution.

The existence of soul can be traced out as far back as to the time of creation when the soul existed in its naked form as a separate entity. From that primary state of existence of the soul in its most subtle form we marched on to grosser and grosser forms of existence. This may be expressed as coverings round the soul.

The earliest coverings were of the finest nature and with them we existed in our homeland, the Realm of God. The additions of more and more coverings of ego continued and subsequently *Manas* (Psyche), *Chit* (consciousness), *Buddhi* (intellect) and *Ahankar* (ego) in cruder forms began to contribute to our grossness. In due course *samskars* (impressions) began to be formed which brought about their resultant effects. Virtue and vice made their appearances. Slowly our existence assumed the densest form. The effect of samskars is the commencement of the feelings of comforts, miseries, joys and sorrows. Our liking for joys and comforts and our disliking for sorrows and miseries have created further complications. We generally find ourselves surrounded with pain and misery and we think that deliverance from them is our main goal. This is a very narrow view of the problem.

The aims and objects of life conceived in terms of worldly ends are almost meaningless. We forget that pains and miseries are only the symptoms of a disease but the disease lies elsewhere. To practise devotion to please God in order to secure worldly comforts or gains is but a mockery.

- Shri Ram Chandra

HIS TEACHING AND VISION OF CREATION

It might seem that there is no relation between these two subjects, but it is not so. The story of the Universe is the same as the story of humanity. Men of all times have always looked at the sky in wonder.

Today's technology has made it possible for man's eyes to reach fantastic limits in the Universe and capture images billions of light-years away from us. Still, according to Babuji's teaching, there is something in the human being which would not need any sophisticated instrument to see beyond.

When sitting on the seashore looking at the horizon far away in front of us, we feel, deep inside, something inexplicable and great; it is our soul that is perceiving the Infinite which lies beyond the horizon that we see with our physical eyes.

If we could see farther away, if we could have the Hubble telescope's eyes, we would see that, in reality, we are sitting on the shore of the Universe, in front of a sea of forces to which man has given strange names, but which are, in reality, only the forces ruling the Laws of the Universe. Together with galaxies and every other object in the space, man is inextricably interwoven in the cosmic warp. And this is true both for Gnostic and agnostic people.

Now, according to Babuji's vision of the Creation, in the immensity of the Infinite in front of us, beyond the

Material Sphere, beyond the Mental or Supramental Sphere, there is a Sphere which he called 'Splendour'. Still far away, beyond it, there is a point, a Centre, where is hidden the mystery of the Universe's birth. To this event every one of us was present as "separate entity" essence of a seed that carried within *Manas*, *Buddhi*, *Chit*, and *Ahankhar*.

Babuji's knowledge of the Creation was not acquired by studying or reading of the scriptures but it was given him directly by Nature, through the grace of his Master Lalaji Saheb. Babuji could read Nature as an open book.

Where Science has no instruments to see further, a true Master's eyes can see as far as the origin of all things. Babuji was not a very cultured man and used to express himself in a very simple way, with very simple words.

The Regions mentioned in his books are but the three different phases of creation in which energy passed from a latent condition or essence, which he called 'Centre', into a second phase where cosmic energy went on increasing and expanding, which he called Mental Region, and subsequently to a third phase where particles came into being, starting their dazzling play of action and reaction in "form and light," which he called "Material Region" or "Heart Region." This is also the sphere of Maya. In this sphere everything is changing and transforming continuously. Physicists are well aware of this. It is their fantastic multidimensional subatomic world with which they are confronted in their work. Our solid three dimensional reality is only illusory.

Man, from head to foot, belongs to this Region of the Heart. When he starts his spiritual journey he is at the border of this great Region. "It is the main artery of God," Babuji wrote, and if we want Realisation we have to cross it, and proceed on to the base where we have come from.

Either it is believed or not, we come from these Regions. We have started our journey from the Centre as a divine sparkle and have travelled throughout that extraordinary cosmic evolution, accumulating matter and with it grossness, living in the land of our Lord until, perhaps four billion years ago this divine sparkle fell into the organic kingdom of life. It was directed towards growth and brought within another great mystery of creation: the DNA.

From that moment, starting its biological evolution, it went on changing into ever more complex forms of existence, until it reached the largest and most complicated mass of thinking matter, with the whole range of human feelings.

The different stages of which Babuji speaks in *Towards Infinity* are not abstract things which have nothing to do with us, but are a constant and continuous becoming, a constant and continuous inner growing, and by 'inner' I mean that part of us which is the seat of the intellect, of intuition, and of love. These are the things which grow and determine the transformation in us.

Life is not optional, nor it is a small meaningless handful of time to be wasted in nonsense or in superficial interests, often self-destroying or, even worse, destroying others.

Such behaviours obscure the real horizon and diminishes the significance of existence. A man cannot remain encircled in the small field of his problems, where exigencies grow and multiply, without leaving him any possible way out. It is in his own inner growth that he can find the way to solve all his problems and discover harmony and love inside himself as well as in others. In a room where the windows are kept closed it will always be dark, and in the dark it is not possible to come to any sort of knowledge. Fear, anxiety, ignorance, and insecurity prevent him from realising that the time has come for him to open the windows. Nevertheless, this will have to happen.

The meditation practice of Shri Ram Chandra Mission gives a new impulse to the sleeping condition of man and prepares him to the maximum highest reach reserved to human beings.

From the beginning I have spoken about Transmission in this book: Pranahuti. Pranahuti is the utilisation of Divine energy for the transformation of man. Slowly, with meditation and with the help of Pranahuti, the trends of the inferior mind weaken and the divine light that we have in our heart awakens. At the beginning, the abhyasi may not feel it, because he is used to feeling through his senses, but after a while he can observe in himself the results of the transmission, which often manifest in subtle changes in the most inner tendencies. Slowly he starts to use all his faculties in the appropriate way. Mind becomes disciplined and in harmony with everything. These are the changes that transmission brings if it is practised regularly and in the correct way.

"High levels of spiritual reach can be possible only through the help of Transmission. Until today no other efficacious method has been discovered," Babuji wrote.

Another important feature of Sahaj Marg is that the Master works in a way that the abhyasis remain unaware of their own progress, to avoid the growth of the ego. This growth of the ego very often happens in less subtle systems, with the consequence that the person develops arrogance and self-importance, which constitute a great hindrance for the spiritual growth.

Pranahuti works on very subtle channels of pure energy. Chariji has always said that this system of meditation will go on during the next millennium. It is a dynamic system and it will be better understood by the future generations, when man has acquired a better knowledge of his own nature and of the nature of the Universe around him.

Nature has always provided to send Prophets and Saints on this earth who were devoted to the good of humanity. They have always brought their teaching according to the needs of times. Now in the era of the nuclear energy, the help comes in the form of Pranahuti.

In the egoistic and corrupted world we are living today, it is not enough to preach honesty and goodness. Not even miracles would be enough to shake man from the present spiritual blindness. Miracles, it has always been seen, make the masses only ask for more miracles, and have more temples and monuments made.

Saints and Prophets come to demonstrate to man his real nature, and not to be immortalised in stone monuments.

Pranahuti is a pure energy which can make the great miracle of transformation. It is a divine force that works within the heart.

Today it is commonly known that we live in a world of electromagnetic waves. Hardware and software are commonly used today, so it should not be difficult to understand how this can be possible. Man is fascinated by the fabulous digital world but doesn't really see what this new world is telling him.

If he would stop a minute and ponder over it, he could realise that there is nothing to marvel at. This electro-magnetic force has always been here since the beginning of time. We should rather wonder what there is behind it – where it comes from.

Far away, in the immensity of the Infinite, there is a place where energy is at its pure state – "unalloyed," Babuji wrote. He was a humble yogi at the highest stage of human evolution. Through his saintly power he could transmit that energy right into the heart of the abhyasis so as to help their spiritual evolution.

Scientists are now starting to use words that Babuji already used in his books, when the world was having it's first experiences with atomic energy. They speak of a zero point that – they say – existed before the 'Big Bang', adding that this point does not, however, seem to be a primary factor in the process of creation but it seems that there is something else beyond it of a primary nature.

Ram Chandra wrote that the primary Force was caused by a stir "a little below the Centre. We think so because currents are abundant in that point and whoever tries to even give a peep into it, is shattered to pieces."

There is such a force in that point to disintegrate the cells of the brain. Perhaps someone would smile at this, but those who have an idea of what Nature's forces are, do not smile. Not few are those who having light-heartedly practised concentration have encountered great dangers and even death. It is necessary to have a guide to venture on fields of unknown forces.

These forces within us must be awakened gradually and in such a way that the lower centres (chakras) be awakened only after the higher and subtler centres have been awakened, otherwise we shall be prey of the worse and lower instincts existing in man.

When man made his first appearance on the earth he was simple and had within the purity of his origin. At those very first stages of his terrestrial life the remembrance of his origin was present in him. According to Freud, it seems that primitive men used faculties such as clairvoyance, intuition, and telepathy to survive and to communicate with others. But apparently he has lost these faculties due to his growth towards grossness. Nevertheless these superior faculties still exist in him. Scholars of these topics believe that they must really be qualities of the soul, because they seem to vanish whenever they are used for material purposes or to harm others.

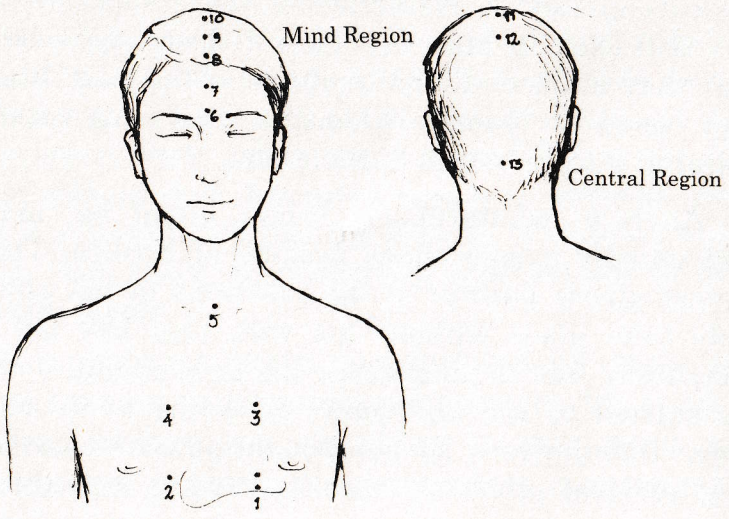
Anyhow, whatever his origin might be, man is undoubtedly a marvellous product of Nature. Though almost ninety percent of the functions in his physical body take place without his will, God has left him completely free to administer his own mental activity. He started to use his brain "according to its magnitude," Babuji wrote. By his thought-power he solved his first survival problems, such as feeding, reproduction,

and finding shelter for himself and his offspring. These same problems he shares with all the rest of the animals, including insects.

When man was created, his condition was 'dormant', according to Babuji. The elements that he had brought with him were sleeping and had not manifested yet. Gradually, the power endowed to him started to manifest in his mind. He, then started his own tiny creation, and in this way got away from God.

As Babuji puts it: "We have set up a tiny creation of our own individual material existence, having layers after layers of grossness and opacity. What is now to be done is to shutter off these layers of opacity one by one and assume the absolute as we had at the time of creation."

In his wonderful book, *Towards Infinity*, Babuji has given a detailed description of knots or *granthis* which have to be purified. In the human body they are located in the following manner:



The thirteenth knot is the Centre in man. It was formed with the first *kshob*, the primary vibration. In Babuji's words: "The Centre has got its position in human body, on the back side of the skull called occipital prominence. It has connection with the only Real thing. It is the essence of life and has got all the powers essential for the upkeep of the body. It is a pulpy substance less than even a hair's breadth, and the colour is grey like that of dawn or only its faint reflection."

It is, perhaps, for the unconscious longing of his divine past, that man sooner of later will starts his search for Reality.

Today this search can be started on a quite rational basis. Man has the instrument for that: the mind. Mind is, in fact, the real instrument in man. With it he can think, create, destroy, invent. Mind is vaster than the sky – it has been said – it is deeper than the sea. But what has man been doing with it? We are poisoning and destroying everything on earth. Man's behaviour towards nature has reached outrageous limits. We have covered the earth, the rivers, and the sea with toxic and radioactive substances which will remain for hundreds of thousands of years to come and will constitute a great danger, not only for the people at present living on the planet, but also for those who will live here after us. We have created so much toxic waste that now the problem is where to hide it, when we know very well that either from under the ground or from the depth of the oceans, it will still be a mortal menace.

Fish are dying, groups of whales seem to have lost their sense of direction. Water tables on the planet are polluted. Pollution has been found even under the

eternal ice of the North Pole. Not to speak of the horrible genetic manipulations that scientists without scruples are experimenting with. They are trying to take God's place in the creation of man!

Nature, violated and ravished is giving signals of impatience: earthquakes, inundation, wars, and calamities of all kinds are happening. The seasons have changed their rhythms, there is no more spring nor autumn.

Temperature swings from exceptionally high heat to freezing cold. A heavy atmosphere of bhog has descended on the earth, causing much suffering to humanity. At this point even stone images of Madonna may shed tears of blood – as, it seems, has happened somewhere in Italy – because God cannot help us. He is unable to do anything. He has no power for that, because he has given us mind and free will. We are his creation, but what we create with our mind is our own creation. This is why Babuji used to say, "Destroy your creation and what remains it is His creation." This does not mean that we have to destroy our houses, our belongings, etc.; it only means that we must start using our brains in the appropriate way and in harmony with the laws of nature.

The trend of human mind has been so misdirected that now it is imperative that a radical change take place in the human being. We must change one by one. Only in this way humanity will change. Evolution works this way.

Every hundred years humanity is completely changed on the face of the earth, and those who will come after us will have to live on the litter we have left behind. It is therefore necessary that each one feels

personally responsible for how the terrestrial *Res Publica* is being administered, especially in its bio-chemical and geomagnetic patrimony.

I have said somewhere in this text that Babuji has never taught us anything in words, and it is true. I remember at the beginning, to my every question on how to get certain results, his reply was one and always the same: "Through meditation." Therefore, I soon understood that it was no use to ask questions. The only thing was to try. But the Western mentality is too far from spirituality to consider meditation as an important and integral part in one's everyday life, especially in Italy, where often it is confused with religion.

Nevertheless, this change in the human consciousness must take place. Somehow this will have to happen and man will come to know how to awaken those qualities that will make of him a real Man. This can be possible only through meditation. With the practice, he will experience personally that something is really happening inside of him.

Meditation is not a waste of time nor a void in the functioning of the brain. "Whatever we think or contemplate produce vibrations within," Babuji wrote.

Did we ever think what Babuji's words mean, translated into the current knowledge of the brain that science has acquired today? The 'vibrations' are but the bio-electric impulses running through the amazing labyrinth of the nervous circuits of our brain, where billions of cells are busy producing different chemical elements according to the type of message they receive from the outside world.

When we are angry or frightened or worried, these feelings are responsible for the type of chemical elements that they produce, which, expanding through the central nervous system to our entire body, make us feel upset and disturbed.

Vice-versa, when the message is of peace and calmness the 'vibrations within' produce a different kind of chemical called endorphins. These are the substances that regulate the feeling of sorrow and pain. They are naturally produced in the human organism and evidently their number increases during meditation. In fact, somebody has given them the name of 'mystic proteins', as they seemed to be present in large quantities in holy persons.

Though the mechanism of the brain is involved in meditation, it is in the heart that is played the drama of our existence. It is in the heart that we feel joy and sorrow. It is in the heart that all emotions and turmoils are recorded.

"The heart is the playing field of the mind," Babuji wrote. We have to calm down the heart. But how can we do it? "Through meditation," is the only reply.

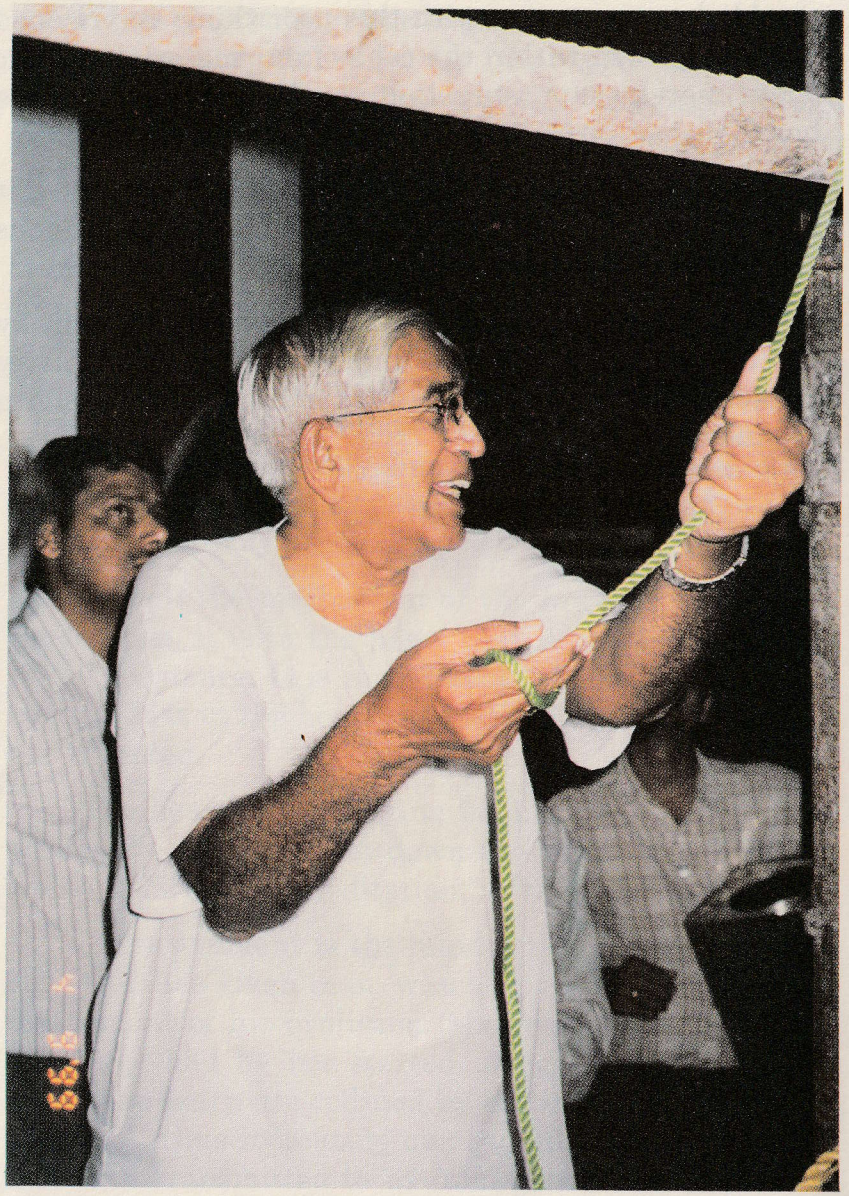
The instrument is the mind – this great patrimony that God has given man, which is, ultimately, the only instrument of his evolution. Man would still be at the stone-age had he not started using his mind. All the things we learn are codified by the mind and passed to the DNA, thus increasing our genetic patrimony which has been transmitted to us from generation to generation throughout the centuries.

To do meditation may not be easy at the beginning, because for us 'doing' is associated with physical action, and there is no physical action in it. We only try to

establish a connection with this poor thing, imprisoned and abandoned within the cage of our material egoistic body, merely supposing that we have a light in the heart.

If meditation is regularly and correctly practised, it leads to the regulation of the mind and to a continuous expansion of the heart.

Scientists are today wondering whether chemistry can transform the mind. Babuji would say, "Chemistry cannot transform the mind, but the mind can transform chemistry."



Chariji ringing the new bell at Babuji Memorial Ashram in Chennai, April, 1999.

SAHAJ MARG TODAY

Since Babuji's passing away in 1983, Shri Parthasarathi Rajagopalachari, whom we affectionately call Chariji, has carried out his Master's work as his Spiritual Representative and President of the Mission, as was Babuji's will and wish.

During these sixteen years he has given lectures, held seminars, and produced a considerable number of books, spreading Sahaj Marg meditation throughout the world. His great love for Babuji is now being lavished on the abhyasis, with a special attention on the youth that, both in the East and West, follow his teaching as once they used to follow Babuji's.

In times such as these we are living today, where all kind of values – social, moral, spiritual – seem not to exist anymore, his teaching is of the utmost importance to make people understand that a radical change must take place in each one of us, if the human race and life itself is to survive on this wonderful, small planet of ours, reduced almost to death by the inconsiderate and irresponsible behaviour of its own children.

Today, thanks to Chariji, to his intense work and full dedication, there are ashrams and centres in all parts of the planet. Sahaj Marg information is today available on the Internet.

In this era characterised by digital discoveries, this Master is working in tune with Nature. He is doing his work in perfect harmony with Nature. He is a modern Master, highly cultured and very sensitive to the many problems of youth.

Chariji has an extraordinary capacity of expression and a charisma which enraptures and warms both young and less young people, who are always in greater numbers flocking to him from all parts of the world, to be guided through the jungle of human life. He is working for Nature for the spiritual development of mankind.

Chari is a man who has lived his life like any other person in this world. He had to face his everyday problems like any one of us, inside the family, in his work environment, and with society as well. As a child, being an orphan, he suffered the cold and loneliness of being without a mother. His mother's death when he was only five years of age has deeply influenced his childhood, his adolescence, and even his adult life.

Janaki, his mother, was a beautiful young woman who died in the green years of her youth, a few days after having given birth to his only sister, who also died a few years later.

Chariji grew up in the South of India, together with his two younger brothers and his father, a very strict and scrupulous Brahmin who was very often absent for work. For years, living in a totally male environment, he has suffered the void of a home, without the warmth of a mother.

I was moved to tears when I read in his beautiful book *Down Memory Lane* how in his childhood memory he remembered her, "cold and stiff packed up in ice,"

while everybody around her was crying and he, too, was crying, thinking that his mother would feel cold with all that ice around her. In the South of India the heat may reach very high temperatures, and they had to keep her like that, awaiting the arrival of his father, who was at that time working in Calcutta.

The many questions he started asking himself since his tender age became ever more pressing for him, until, as an adult man, happily married and the father of a handsome son, and an excellent career in the Sales sector of a chemical factory, he met his Master, Babuji.

Since then – it was 1964 – Chari followed his Master regularly, constantly. He tenderly loved him as a human being and served a revered him as his Master. On his side, Babuji had a great affection for him and considered him as his own son. He would never go on a trip abroad if Chari could not go with him. Even in his last trip to Europe, though he had some members of his own family accompanying him, Babuji wanted Chari with him, otherwise he would not go.

Once, while they were in Munich, Chari was helping him out of the bathtub, and Babuji said, "Look here! There is great excitement towards you. I want to give you something now." Master's gifts were not of this world "I asked Lalaji Saheb about it, and he said, 'Everything is in store only for him.' Do you understand? They are in store only for you."

And then, hugging him with great love, he said, "You have done for me so much service such as even my own sons have not done for me. May you live long!"

The years have shown that something was really in store only for him.

Today we do not see each other so easily, but though far away, in my heart there has always been a particular place for this Great Brother of mine who has had a great role in my spiritual story.

This is a tale, lovingly told, of an aspirant's search for a living spiritual Master, and the unfolding of the inner journey, or *yatra*, which began at the feet of Shri Ram Chandraji Maharaj of Shahjahanpur, affectionately known as Babuji.

In *Spiritual Yatra*, Toni Bernardi paints a colourful picture of her relationship with her Master from the years 1972 through the time of Babuji's *mahasamadhi* in 1983. In addition to her narration of her five trips to Shahjahanpur and Babuji's travels to Rome, Munich, and Paris, it includes her correspondence with Babuji, excerpts from her diary, hand-drawn sketches of Babuji's home, and photographs.

SHRI RAM CHANDRA MISSION

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